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沙村広明

Смотрячка в весенний сезорук

—

Хироаки Самура

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春風のスイグラチカ

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SNEGUROCHKA OF THE SPRING BREEZE

SAMURA HIROAKI

CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

BELKA.....MAIN CHARACTER

SHCHENOK.....HER ATTENDANT

BYKOV.....MANAGER OF THE DACHA (SEASONAL SECOND HOME)

BOLONEV.....DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE SECRET POLICE (OGPU)

MIKHALKOV.....OGPU STAFF

VALENTINA.....HOUSEKEEPER EMPLOYED BY MIKHALKOV

MARSHA.....BELKA'S STEP SISTER

BADMAEV.....DOCTOR SPECIALISING IN TIBETAN MEDICINE

FELIX.....EXILED NOBLE

MENZHINSKII.....DIRECTOR OF THE OGPU

MARIA.....EXILE WORKING AT AN AUTOMOBILE FACTORY

IRINA.....HER COLLEAGUE

I HEARD THE RESULT OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINATION FROM DR BOTKIN, IRA
IN OTHER WORDS
IRA... THIS IS... "A MOST UNFORTUNATE RESULT"
IN OTHER WORDS... WHAT DOES THAT MEAN...
...I DIDN'T KNOW THAT...
MAYBE YOU ALREADY KNOW...?
"TYPE AB"
IT'S A BLOOD TYPE DISCOVERED 5 YEARS AGO

JUST WHOSE CHILD
ARE YOU HOLDING RIGHT NOW?

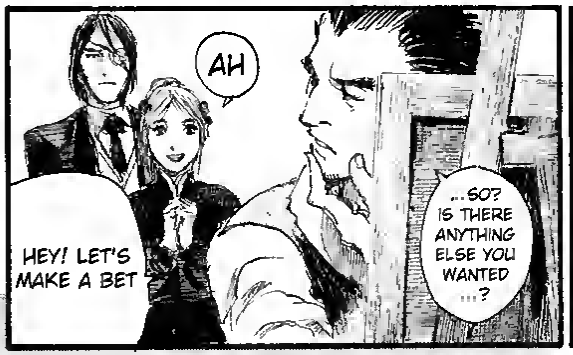
CHAPTER 1 THE SQUIRREL AND PUPPY'S HOUSE

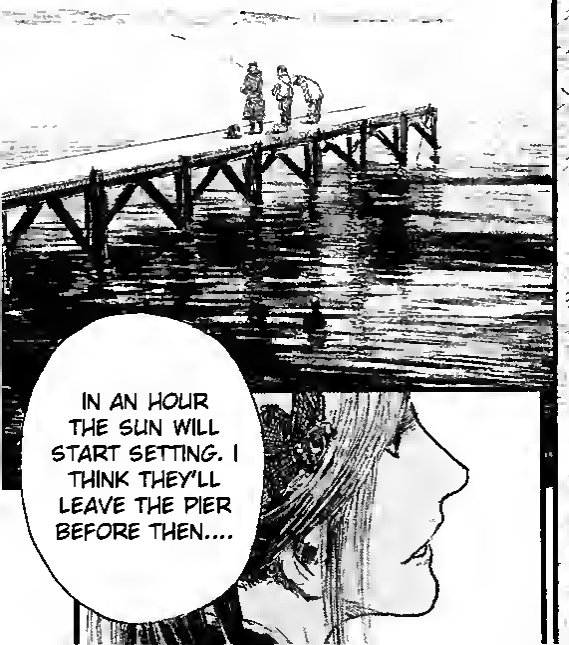
"BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T POLITICAL PEOPLE"
THAT MAY SEEM STRANGE, BUT IT'S THE HONEST REASON. WELL... I WAS FEELING DEPRESSED
THE REASON I STARTED EXCHANGING IDLE CHIT-CHAT WITH THE TWO OF THEM WAS
THE SOVIET UNION - KARELSKAYA AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC
——1933——

CAN YOU SEE THE CHURCH ON KIZHI ISLAND FROM HERE?
THOSE MUST BE SOME AMAZING BINOCULARS
...OF COURSE I CAN'T SEE IT
THERE'S NOTHING TO SEE OUT THERE SO I JUST PAINT FROM MY IMAGINATION
ARE YOU A COMMUNIST PARTY MAN?

...SHE LOOKS OVER 20...
I'M 17
YES... ARE YOU TRAVELLERS?
LEARN TO DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM TROUBLE WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG
THAT MANSION OVER THERE IS GORGEOUS
DO YOU LIVE THERE?
YES, IT'S MY HOUSE ...
OR SO I WISH...
BUT I LIVE THERE... I'VE BEEN PUT IN CHARGE OF MANAGING IT

*DACHA: A RUSSIAN COUNTRY HOUSE





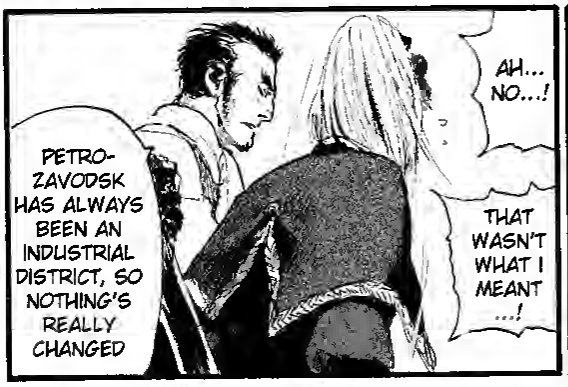
IT'S A MATTER OF PATIENCE
A BET... WHAT WOULD WE BE BETTING?

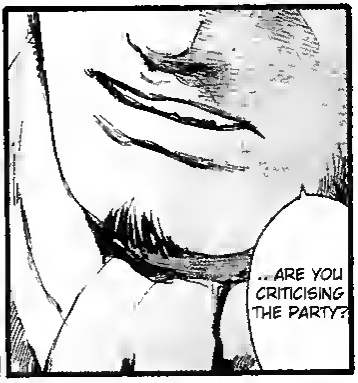
WILL THEY LEAVE TOGETHER?
A SIMPLE BET LIKE THAT
OR WILL ONE.. MAYBE TWO LEAVE EARLIER?

PLEASE LET ME STAY AT THAT DACHA FOR A WEEK IF I WIN

...THAT PROPERTY BELONGS TO THE PARTY. I CAN'T MAKE THAT BET!
...OKAY
THEN I BET THAT THEY'LL ALL LEAVE TOGETHER
BUT
I'M SO HAPPY YOU ACCEPTED! THEN I'LL TAKE THEM LEAVING ONE BY ONE
...SO
WHAT KIND OF FISH ARE IN THIS LAKE?
AT THIS TIME OF YEAR YOU CAN CATCH ANYTHING: BREAM, SALMON, REDFIN...

SINCE THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS, THEY'VE BEEN BUILDING FACTORIES ON THE RIVERS EVERYWHERE
AND THE WATER'S BECOMING DIRTIER AND DIRTIER
BUT PEOPLE KEEP FISHING LIKE THEY ALWAYS HAVE


AH... NO...!
THAT WASN'T WHAT I MEANT ...!
PETRO-ZAVODSK HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT, SO NOTHING'S REALLY CHANGED


..ARE YOU CRITICISING THE PARTY?

RECRUITING?
FROM THE GULAG

I WORKED RECRUITING LABOUR FOR THE NEW FACTORIES IN THE ROSTOV AREA
...UNTIL LAST YEAR

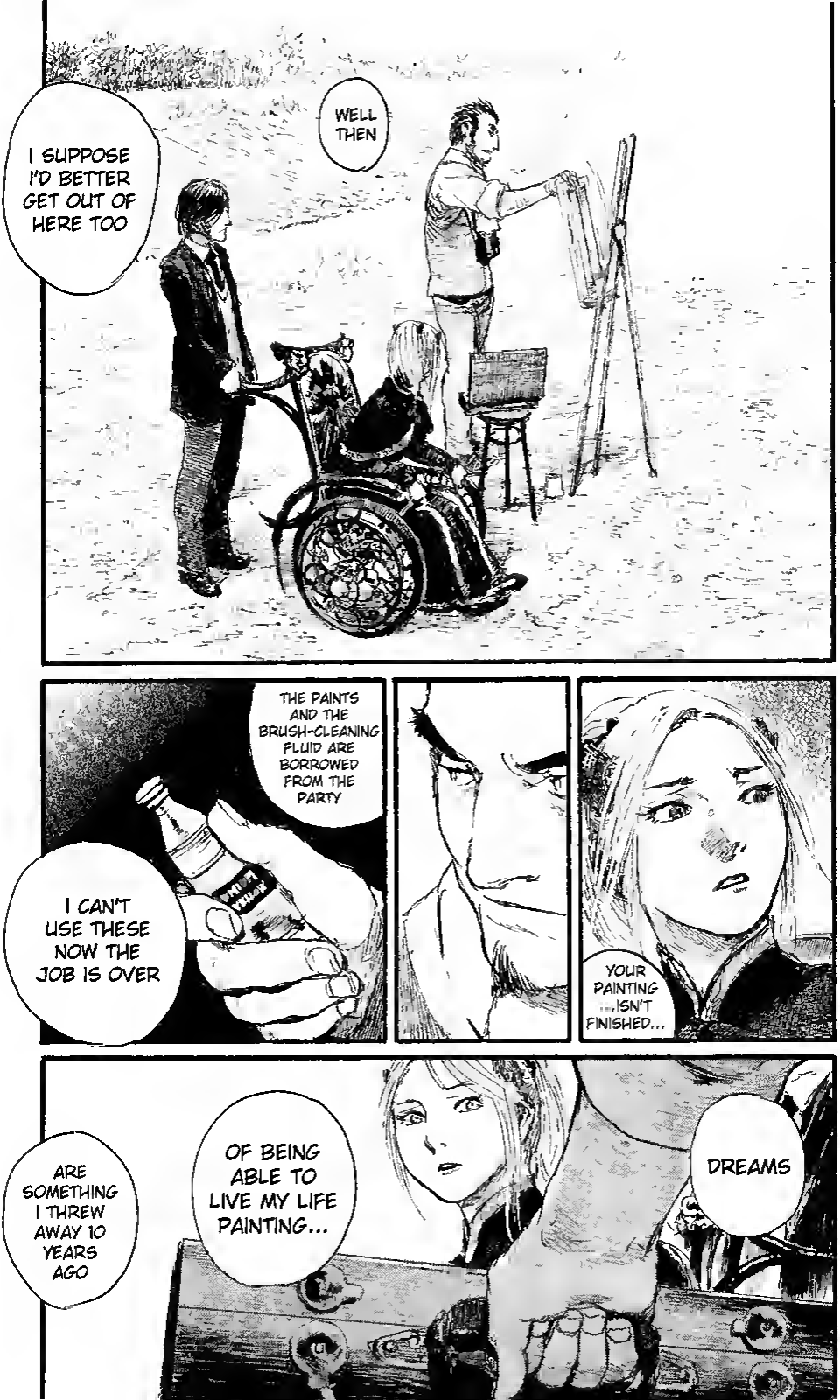
I FOUND THOSE WHO LOOKED LIKE THEY COULD WORK AND TOOK THEM ALL THE WAY TO THE AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY FACTORY IN ROSTOV
EVERYDAY I DILIGENTLY PUT THEM ON TRAINS TO SIBERIA
ANTIGOVERNMENT FACTIONS, UKRAINIANS, RIOTOUS KULAKS*, PEACEFUL KULAKS
*KULAK: A MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF PEASANTS WHO BECAME PROPRIETORS OF THEIR OWN FARMS AND OPPOSED COLLECTIVISATION
AND THEN AT THE END OF LAST YEAR I WAS TRANSFERRED HERE. EVEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS A HEART. HAHA
I FELT THE STRENGTH DRAINING OUT OF ME JUST LOOKING AT THEM
THOSE WHO LIVED TWO YEARS IN THE SIBERIAN GULAG ARE SOMETHING ELSE...
THEY SAY ONLY A QUARTER OF PEOPLE MAKE IT OUT OF SIBERIA ALIVE
HMM... I GUESS SO
...IS THAT TRUE?
...BUT...
I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL THAT THROUGH YOUR INFLUENCE PEOPLE FROM THE GULAG WERE ABLE TO WORK OUTSIDE OF IT

SHCHENOK ...!
*VUZ. HIGHER EDUCATION
MY FRIEND FROM MY VUZ* YEARS... DIDN'T MAKE IT OUT
IT IS

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
...BELKA
BELKA ZAYTSYVICH... SNEGURKA
DON'T WORRY... IT'S FINE, SHCHENOK
...MY APOLOGIES
PUPPY "SHCHENOK" SQUIRREL "BELKA" HARE "ZAYTSY" SNOW MAIDEN "SNEGUROCHKA"...
THERE MUST BE SOME REASON THEY'RE NOT GIVING THEIR REAL NAMES
HEHE... IS THAT SO?
!
LOOK, BELKA

..HE'S GIVEN THE ROD TO THE PERSON NEXT TO HIM AND NOW HE'S PACKING UP
OH
LOOKS LIKE IT'S JUST HIM...

AUGUST MIKHAILOVICH NOSOROG...
HE WAS A FORMER CATHOLIC PRIEST WHO LED A KULAK UPRISING AT VYATKA TWO WEEKS AGO
IT WAS MY COLLEAGUES WHO SHOT HIM
THEY SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME WHETHER THEY'D QUIETLY TAKE HIM AWAY... OR IF THEY'D KILL HIM HERE
THEY TOLD ME TO WATCH WITHOUT DRAWING ATTENTION TO MYSELF
AND IF IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS PLANNING TO ESCAPE, TO STOP HIM
...BUT,
I'M GLAD THERE WAS NO TROUBLE

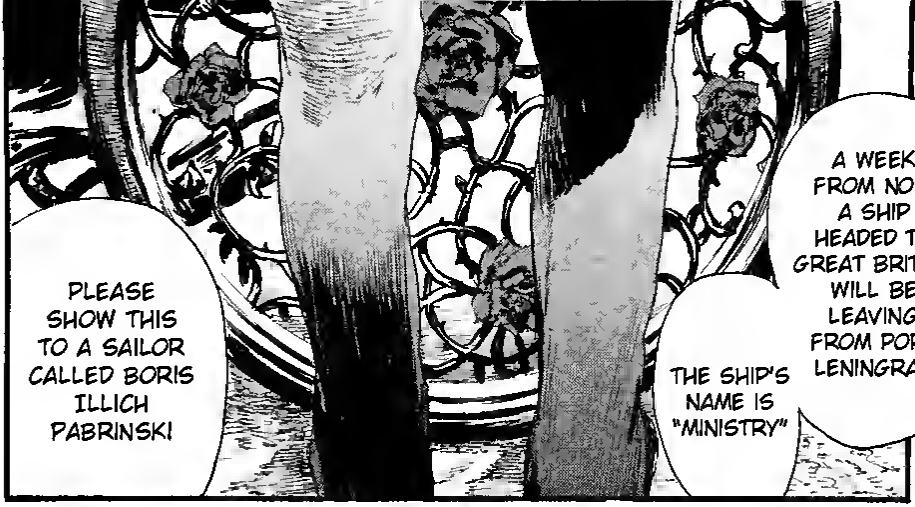

I SUPPOSE I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE TOO
WELL THEN
THE PAINTS AND THE BRUSH-CLEANING FLUID ARE BORROWED FROM THE PARTY
I CAN'T USE THESE NOW THE JOB IS OVER
YOUR PAINTING ...ISN'T FINISHED...
ARE SOMETHING I THREW AWAY 10 YEARS AGO
OF BEING ABLE TO LIVE MY LIFE PAINTING...
DREAMS

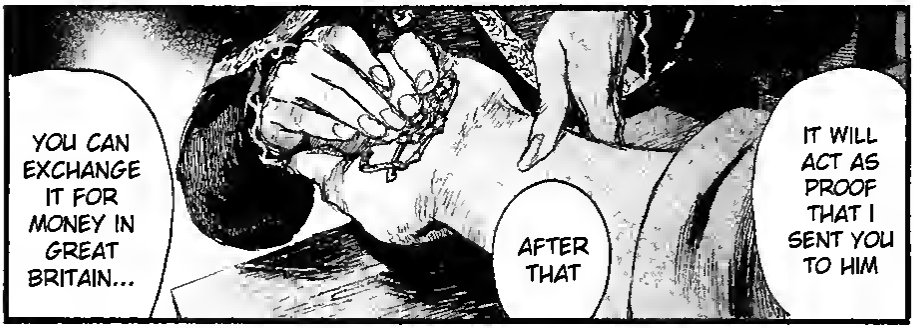
YOU HAVEN'T SAID WHAT YOU WANT FOR WINNING THE BET YET...
MY GOODNESS ...
I DON'T WANT ANY-THING
BESIDES, IF YOU'D BETTER MOVE SOME-WHERE ELSE QUICKLY IF YOU REALLY ARE JUST TOURISTS
UM...
AT LEAST TAKE THIS...
IF THEY COME BACK AND FIND YOU HEAR THEY'LL ASK ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE-SOME QUESTIONS

I TOLD YOU I DON'T WANT ANYTHING...
I CAN'T TAKE THIS...
H... HEY!

SOONER OR LATER YOU WILL MEET THE SAME FATE AS YOUR FRIEND
ILYA EVGENIEVICH BYKOV
THE TEMPEST OF POLITICAL PURGING THAT HAS CONTINUED SINCE THE VOLGA WAR FRONT, AS ORDERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE SECRETARY GENERAL... IS NOT OVER YET
PLEASE LISTEN TO WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY
VERY CAREFULLY

SLOWLY... AND FINALLY
VIOLENTLY
IT WILL PULL THE CARPET FROM UNDER YOU
IN THE NEAR FUTURE... THEY'LL GET BUKHARIN'S SYMPATHISER AND NEP SUPPORTER
WILHELM VOLSKY
AND THEN
SOONER OR LATER
HIS SUBORD-INATE: YOU
...HOW
DO YOU KNOW THAT...
GO INTO EXILE
ILYA EVGENIEVICH



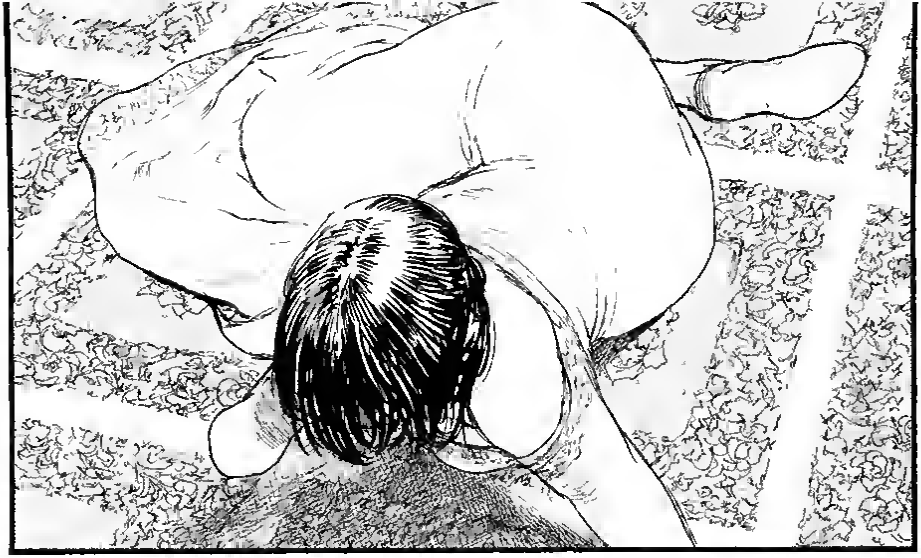


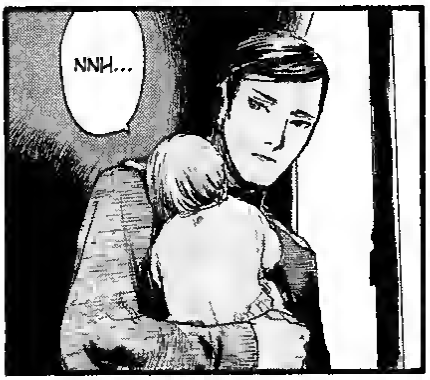
*NEPMAN BUSINESS-PEOPLE WHO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

HOW CAN A SIMPLE BUSINESS-WOMAN KNOW THE WORKINGS OF THE PARTY!?
IS IT A GUESS FROM THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD...?
THIS TINY GIRL!?
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT NECKLACE AT ALL
LIAR!
I THOUGHT I'D LIQUIDATE SOME OF MY PROPERTY BEFORE THE OGPU ZEROED IN ON ME
SO
SHE'S TALKING ABOUT EXILE
BUT I HAVE NO REASON WHATSO-EVER TO TRUST HER
DOES SHE THINK A NORMAL PERSON... WOULD GO ALONG WITH HER STORY?
BUT

THIS GIRL
DID SHE ALWAYS HAVE SUCH INTENSE EYES?
...
BELKA
SHCHENOK
YOU TWO
....?
WELL... WHAT'S YOUR AIM...?

WHY... ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS ...?
OH NO
DID YOU FORGET? I TOLD YOU AT THE START
WE JUST WANT TO TRY STAYING AT THAT DACHA
...WHAT IS IT
ABOUT HER EXPRESSION RIGHT NOW
THAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH?



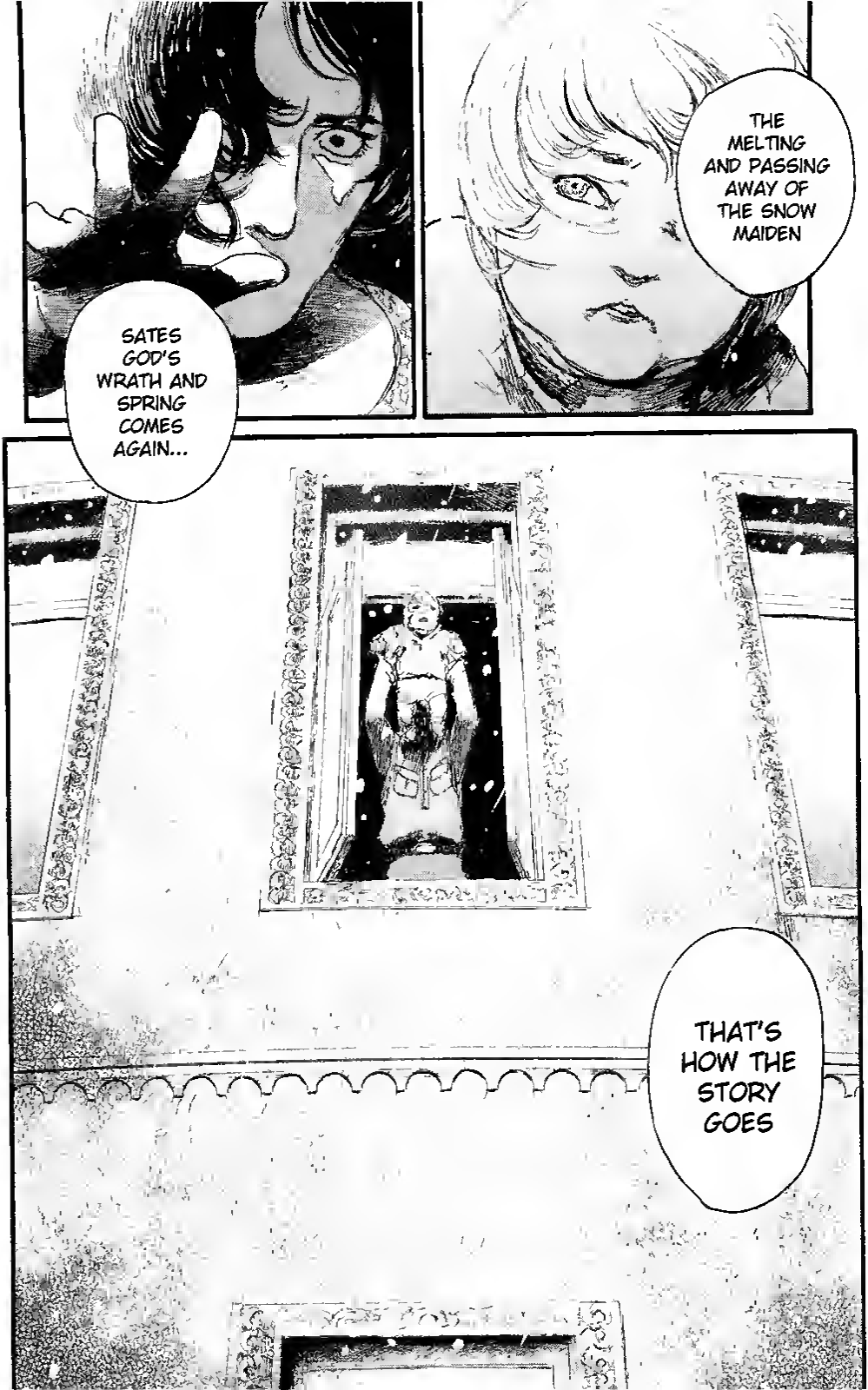

NNH...

NH!
NNH...

.....
.....
.....

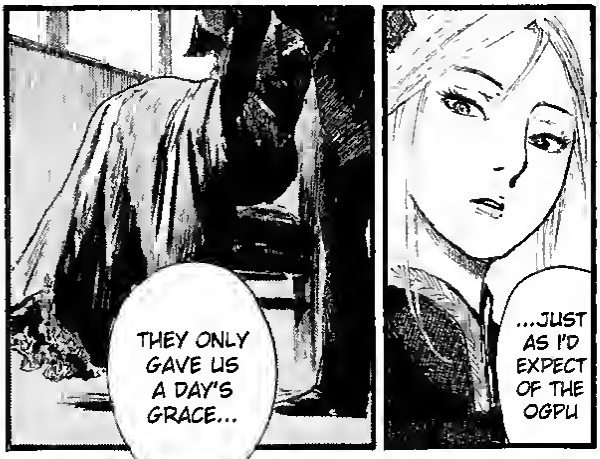
YOU'RE THE SAME AS HER... A WHORE WITH THE FACE OF A SAINT...
...SO IT'S THAT FILTHY PEASANT'S CHILD?

THIS GIRL WAS BORN ON A SNOWY DAY LIKE THIS...
DO YOU REMEMBER KORSAKOV'S "THE SNOW MAIDEN" WE ONCE SAW?
Click
IRA
DED MOROZ AND THE SPRING SPRITE WERE IN LOVE... THE BIRTH OF THE SNOW MAIDEN
PROVOKED GOD'S WRATH, AND HE CLOSED THE TOWN IN WITH SNOW

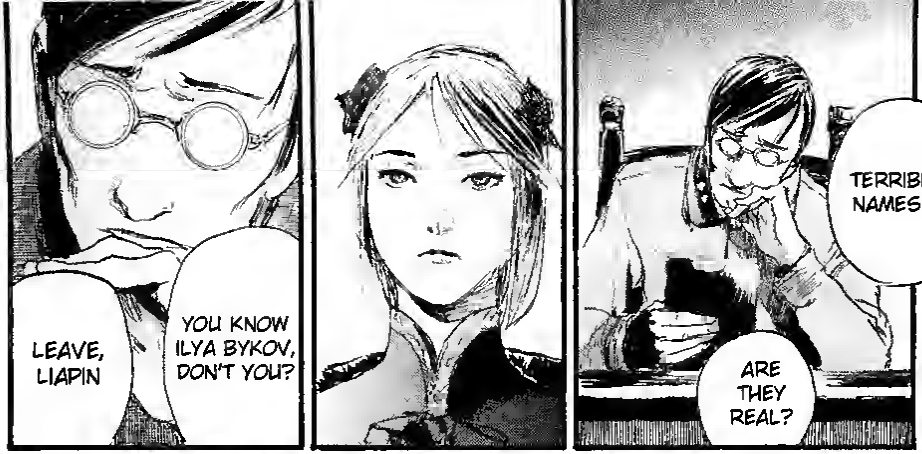

SATES GOD'S WRATH AND SPRING COMES AGAIN...
THE MELTING AND PASSING AWAY OF THE SNOW MAIDEN
THAT'S HOW THE STORY GOES

THAT VERY NIGHT MY WIFE AND I STARTED PACKING
ONLY THREE DAYS AFTER I MET THAT STRANGE GIRL AND MAN... I HEARD A RUMOUR THAT COMRADE VOLSKY HAD BEEN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY THE OGPU
GREAT BRITAIN - LONDON
1933
...YOU SAY YOU RECEIVED THIS FROM A NEPMAN?
DO YOU THINK THIS WILL COVER MY LIVING EXPENSES FOR A MONTH?
ARE YOU KIDDING?
IT'S NOT WORTH ANYWHERE NEAR THAT MUCH...

CHAPTER 2 THE SQUIRREL AND PUPPY'S LIFESTYLE


THEY ONLY GAVE US A DAY'S GRACE...
...JUST AS I'D EXPECT OF THE OGPU

YOU CAN FALL BACK, LIAPIN
NAMES?
YES, SIR!
BELKA SNEGURKA... THE MAN THAT WAS WITH HER IS SHCHENOK MIZGIRYOV


TERRIBLE NAMES...
ARE THEY REAL?
YOU KNOW ILYA BYKOV, DON'T YOU?
LEAVE, LIAPIN

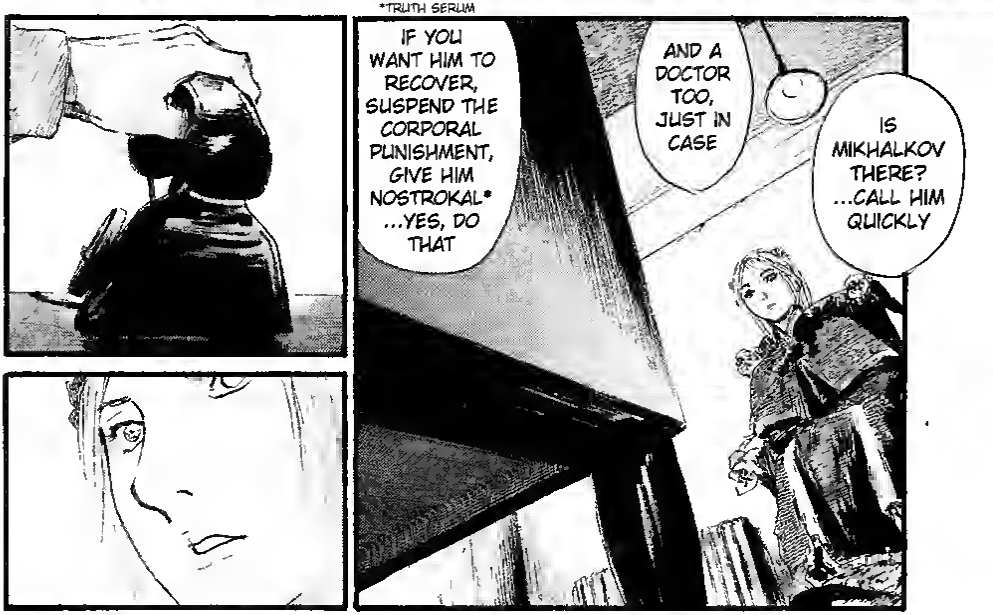
WHO?
Y... YES, SIR
THE MAN WHO LIVED IN THAT DACHA BEFORE YOU TWO
YOU CAN'T HIDE IT... MY SUBORDINATES SAW YOU TALKING TO BYKOV FROM THE PIER ON LAKE ONEGA 5 DAYS AGO

WE TALKED ABOUT THE WEATHER... I NEVER KNEW HIS NAME
...?
THERE'S NO TRAINING WHEELS ON THIS THING
IF I LET GO IT'S GOING TO TOPPLE OVER BACKWARDS ...
....
Twist Twist Twist
Extend... Extend...

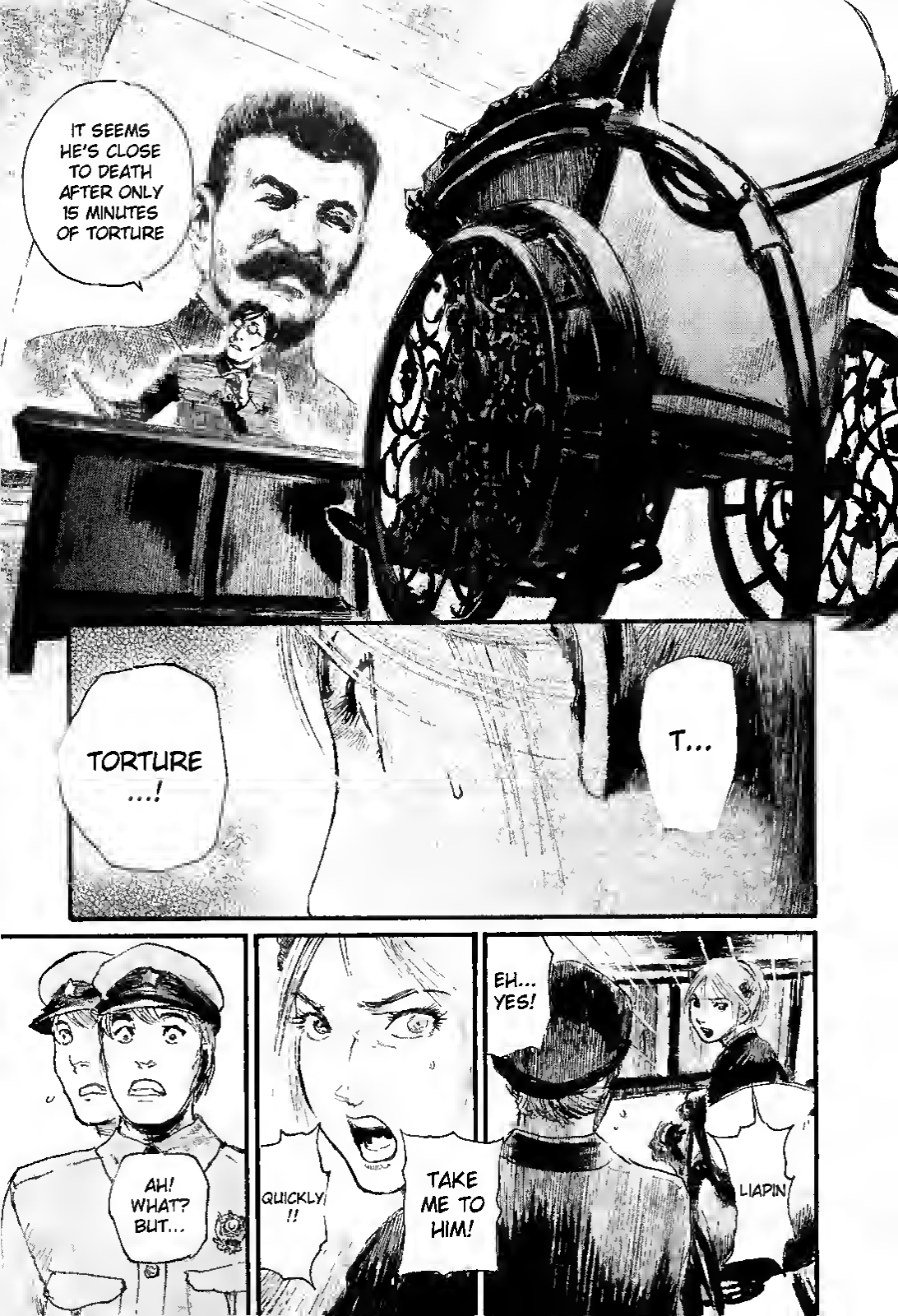
OK...
THANK YOU... I'M FINE
Clonk
WILHELM VOLSKY WAS CAPTURED
UNDER COMRADE MENZHINSKY'S INSTRUCTION
DID YOU KNOW HE'D ABSCOND?
IS THIS A COINCIDENCE? OR
BYKOV WAS VOLSKY'S SUBORDINATE DURING HIS TIME WORKING AT THE GULAG... HE DISAPPEARED TWO DAYS AGO
AND... WE'VE CALCULATED YOU STARTED LIVING IN THAT HOUSE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HIS DISAPPEARANCE
IT'S SUSPECTED HE'S GONE INTO EXILE, BELIEVING HE WAS IN DANGER
YOUR SILENCE
WON'T BENEFIT YOU ONE...
BRNNG

...WHAT?
...
YES...
BRRNING
BRRNNG
BRRRNNN
NNG

*TRUTH SERUM

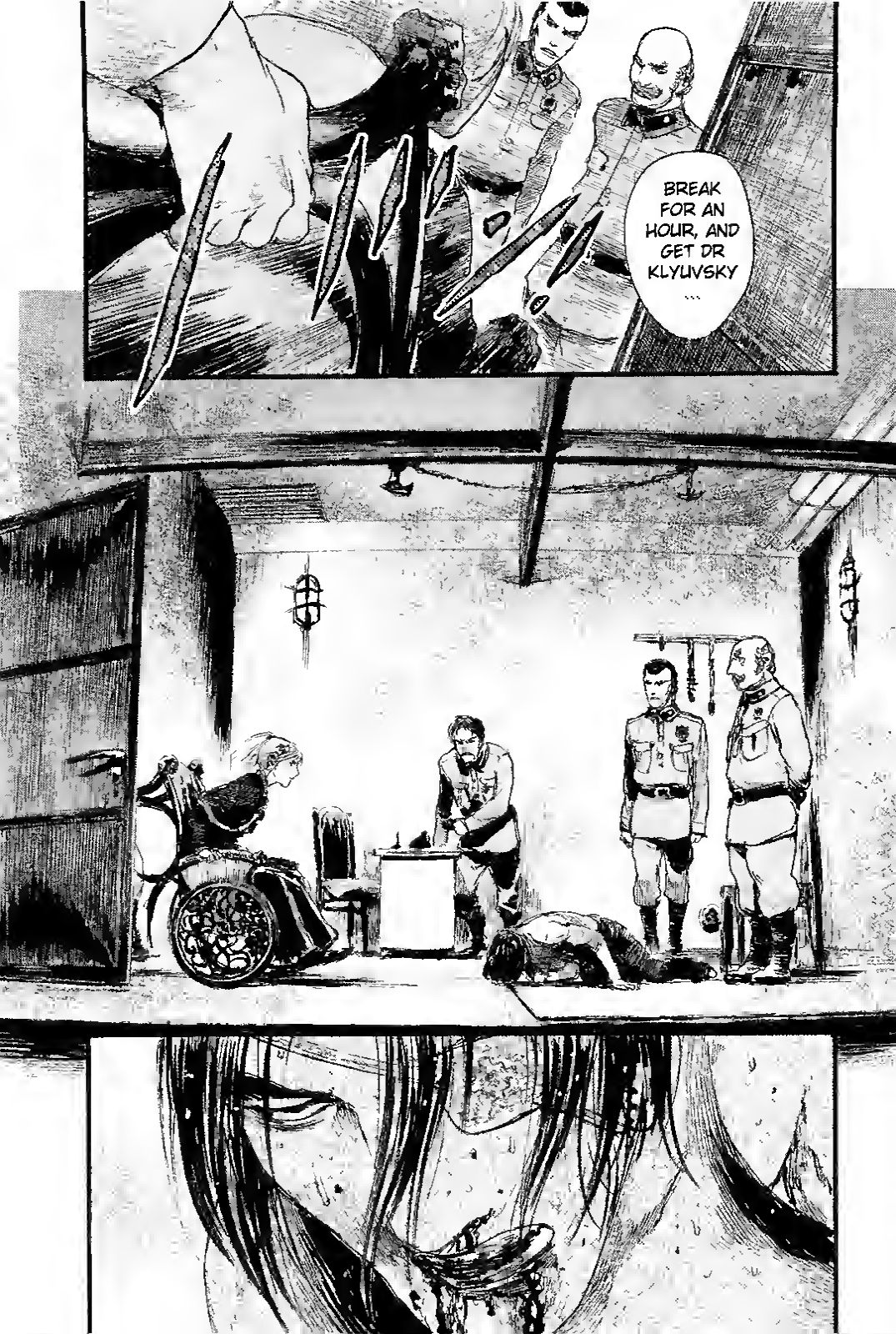

IF YOU WANT HIM TO RECOVER, SUSPEND THE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, GIVE HIM NOSTROKAL* ...YES, DO THAT
AND A DOCTOR TOO, JUST IN CASE
IS MIKHALKOV THERE? ...CALL HIM QUICKLY

DOES HE
HAVE A CHRONIC DISEASE?
SHCHENOK, WAS IT?
...THE MAN WITH YOU... ER

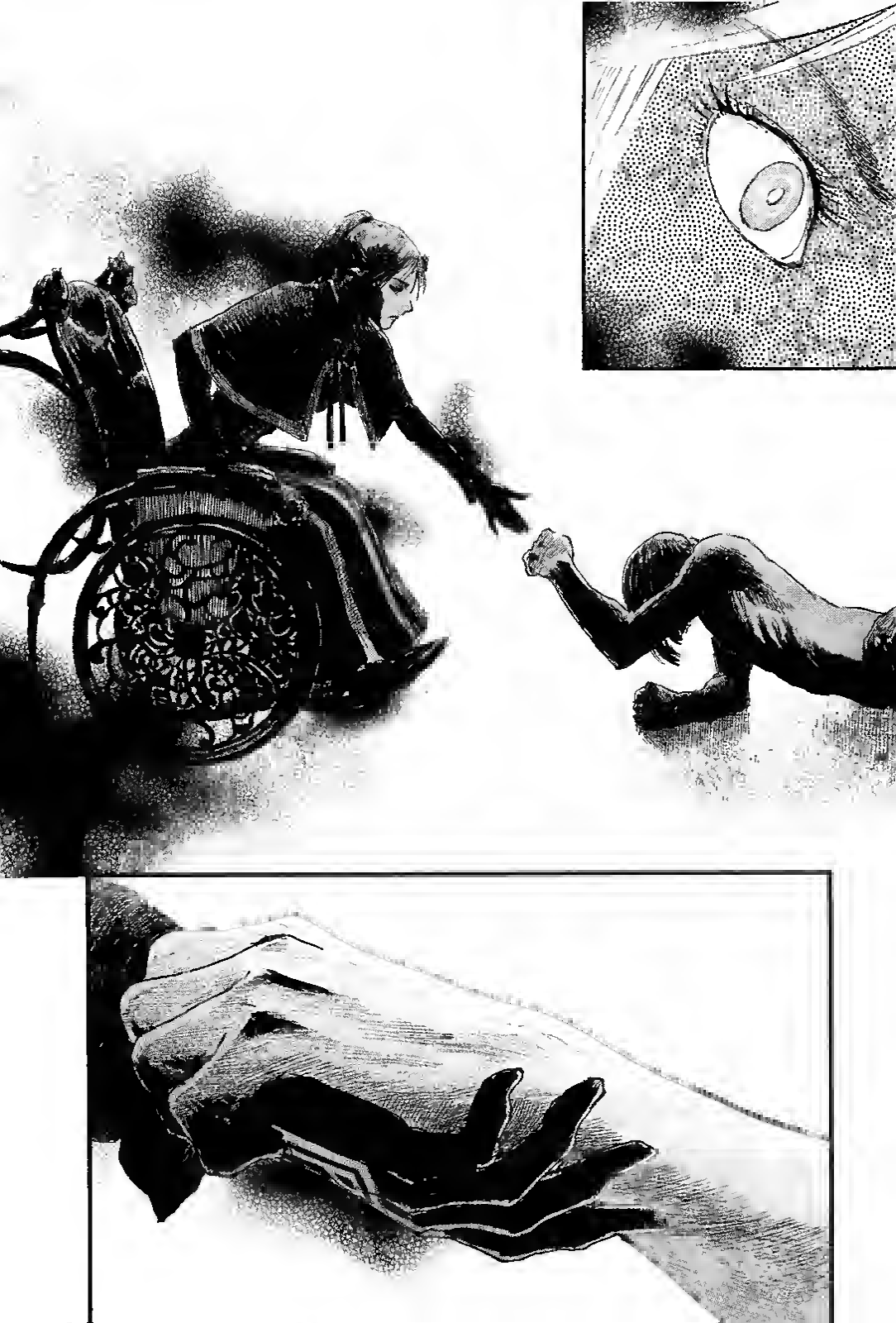

IT SEEMS HE'S CLOSE TO DEATH AFTER ONLY 15 MINUTES OF TORTURE
T...
TORTURE ...!
LIAPIN
EH... YES!
TAKE ME TO HIM!
QUICKLY !!
AH! WHAT? BUT...

LIGH...
!!
DRAG
.....
.....
.....
PUSH HER, LIAPIN
.....
.....
HAH
HAH

HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU HIT HIM?
O... ONLY FIVE TIMES
HAH
HAH
HAH
WHY IS HE SWEATING SO MUCH...? IS HE HAVING A HEART ATTACK OR SOMETHING?

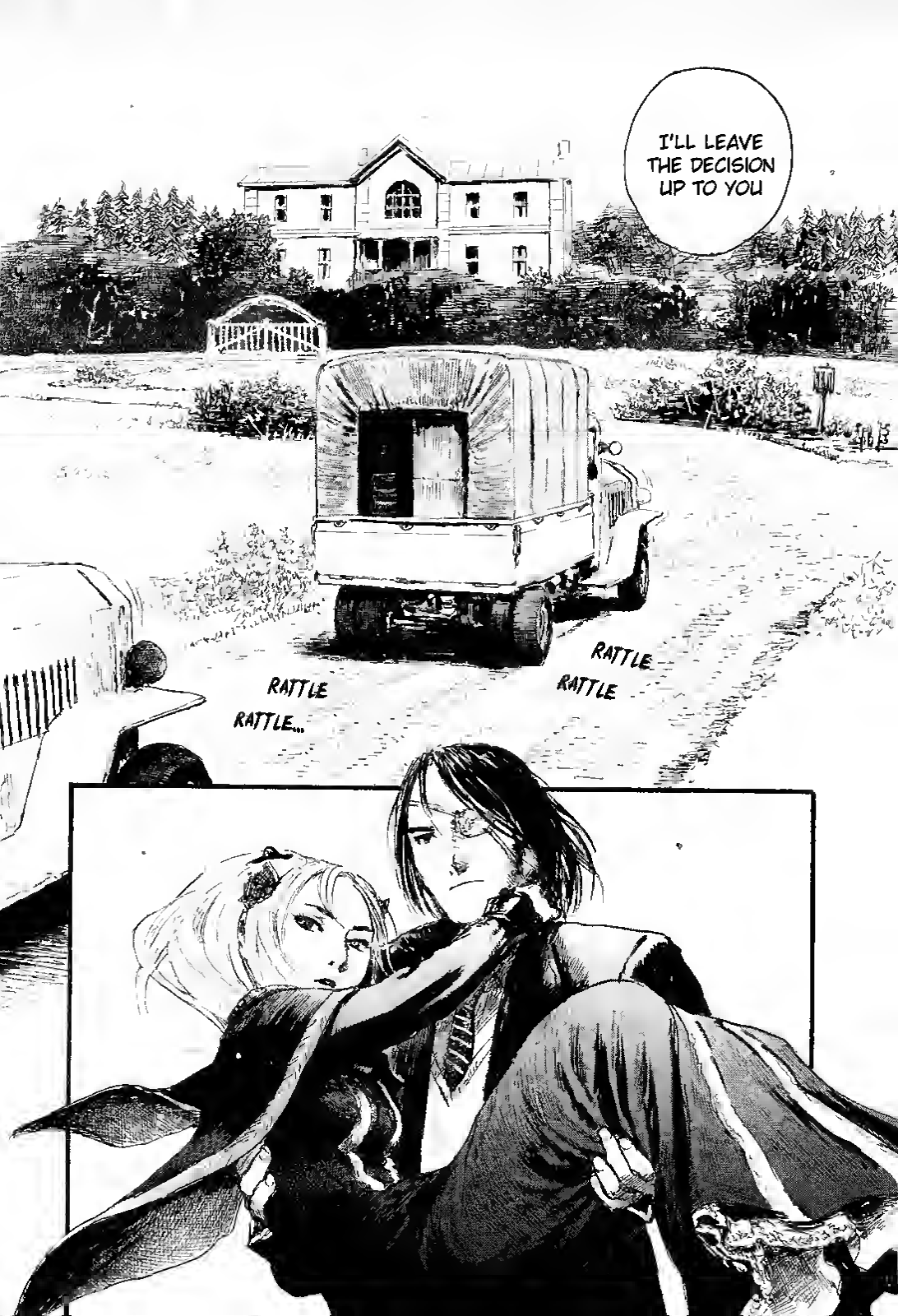

BREAK FOR AN HOUR, AND GET DR KLYUVSKY ...

HAH
HAH
HAH
CRAWL TO ME, SHCHENOK
...SHE WAS SO FRANTIC BEFORE... WHAT HAPPENED?



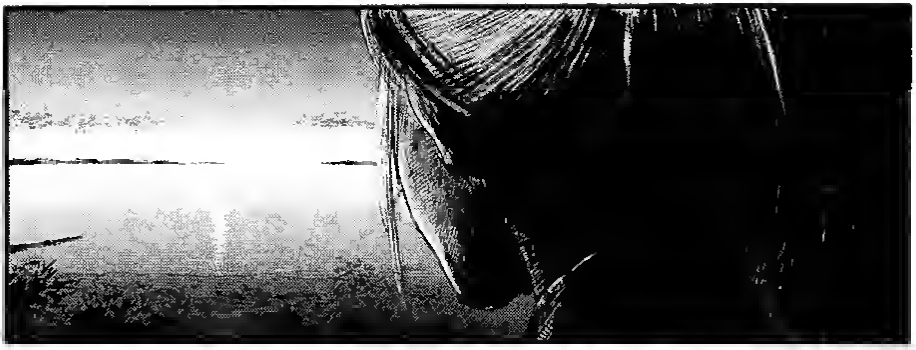
HAH
HAH
DO IT TO ME
...IF YOU'RE GOING TO CONTINUE THE TORTURE

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
?
YES...
SINCE YOUR WIFE PASSED AWAY, YOU'VE BEEN LIVING IN AN APARTMENT HOUSE, HAVEN'T YOU?
. COMRADE MIKHALKOV
YOU CAN CRAM THESE TWO INTO THE BASEMENT OF THE LUBYANKA FOR AIDING AND ABETTING A DEFECTOR
OR YOU CAN TAKE THEM WITH YOU AS SERVANTS
I WILL...
I'LL LET THE PARTY KNOW... PLEASE HAVE ALL YOUR BAGGAGE READY BY TOMORROW
I'LL ENTRUST THE MANAGEMENT OF YU-92 TO YOU


I'LL LEAVE THE DECISION UP TO YOU
RATTLE
RATTLE...
RATTLE
RATTLE

Rattle...
SHCHENOK
HELP WITH MY ROOM FIRST
Shut...
WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THAT BODY BESIDES SUN-BATHING?
MIKHALKOV... STEPANOVICH
CAN I DO ANY-THING...?

CHEEP CHEEP...
CHIRP...



...IT'S TIME TO EAT
Creak
SHIVER

VALENTINA
ISN'T IT!? AND THIS BLACK BREAD...

I DO! IT'S DELICIOUS
YOU DON'T LIKE GEORGIAN STYLE SOUP?

WALNUTS ...

DON'T MIX UNNECESSARY THINGS IN WITH OUR BREAD RATIONS
.....
.....
.....

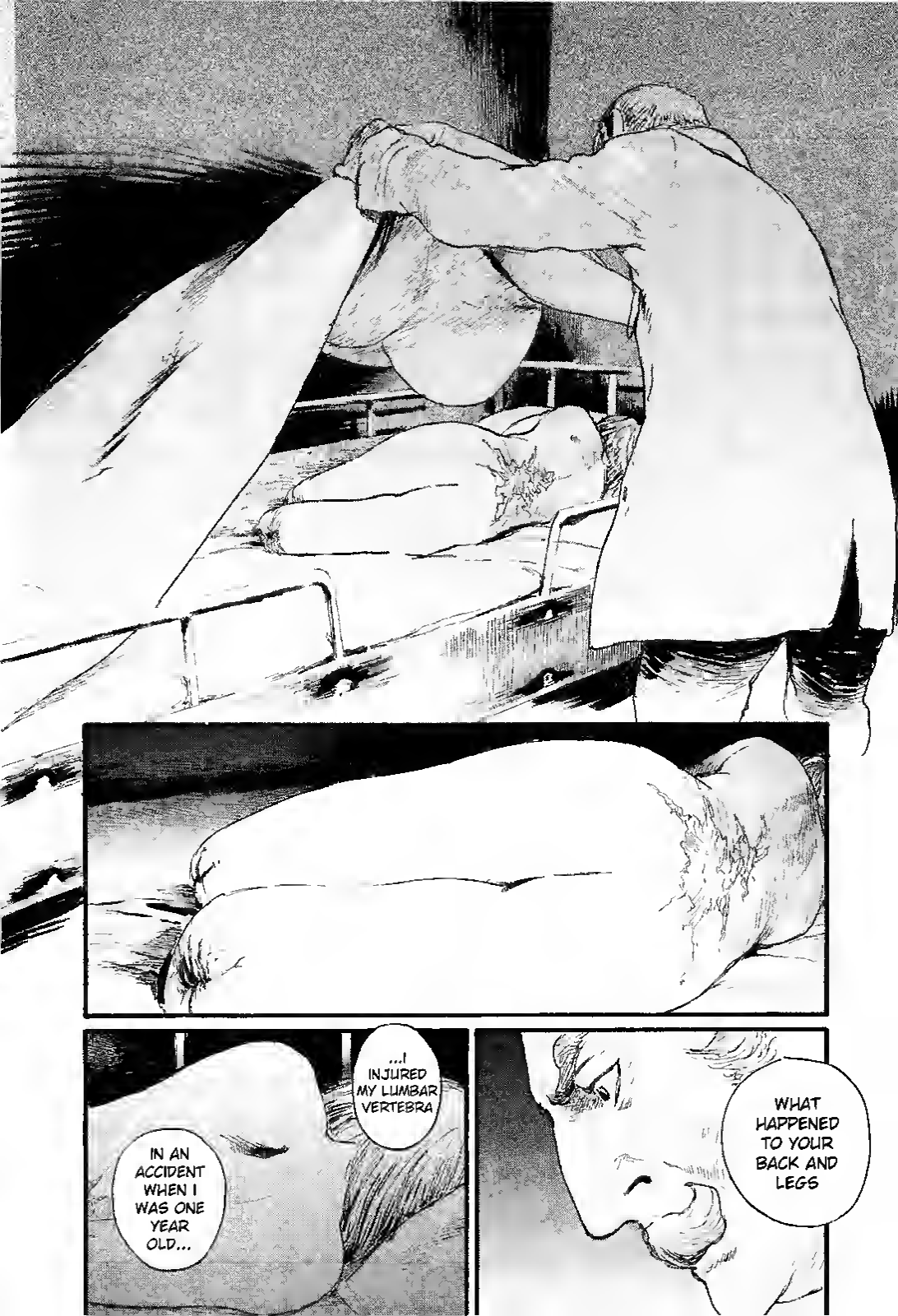
IT'S YOUR LAST JOB OF THE DAY
WHEN YOU'RE DONE CLEANING UP HERE, COME TO MY ROOM WITH BELKA
SHCHENOK
TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES AND GET IN THE BED
BELKA

HELP HER, SHCHENOK
...WHAT'S WRONG?
SURELY
YOU MUST HAVE EXPECTED SOMETHING LIKE THIS?
DID YOU HELP OUT IN ANY WAY TODAY?
IN OUR SOVIET UNION WE WILL NOT TOLERATE PEOPLE WHO DO NOT WORK TO EAT
ARE YOU TRYING TO BE A NOBLE FROM THE CZARIST ERA?

OR WILL YOU GO BACK TO MOSCOW?
WILL YOU USE YOUR BODY AND STAY ON IN THIS HOUSE?
I'LL BE BACK IN HALF AN HOUR... DECIDE BY THEN
I'M GOING DOWNSTAIRS TO DRINK SOME VODKA
I CAN PRETEND NOT TO NOTICE YOUR ABSENCE UNTIL TOMORROW MORNING
IF YOU WISH TO EXCAPE NOW
INCIDEN-TALLY
...BELKA
SHCHENOK

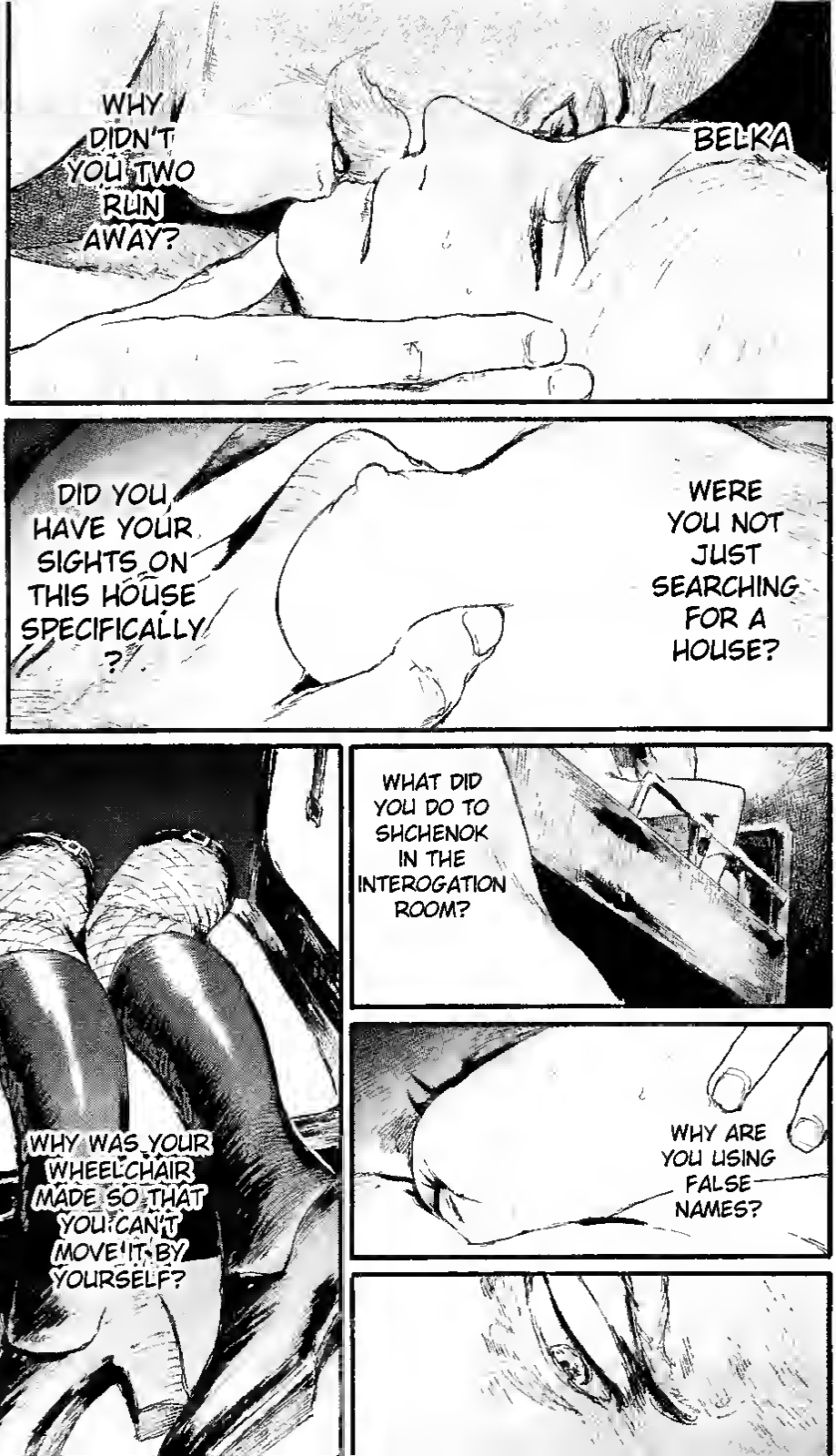
HELP
ME

...
HMPH

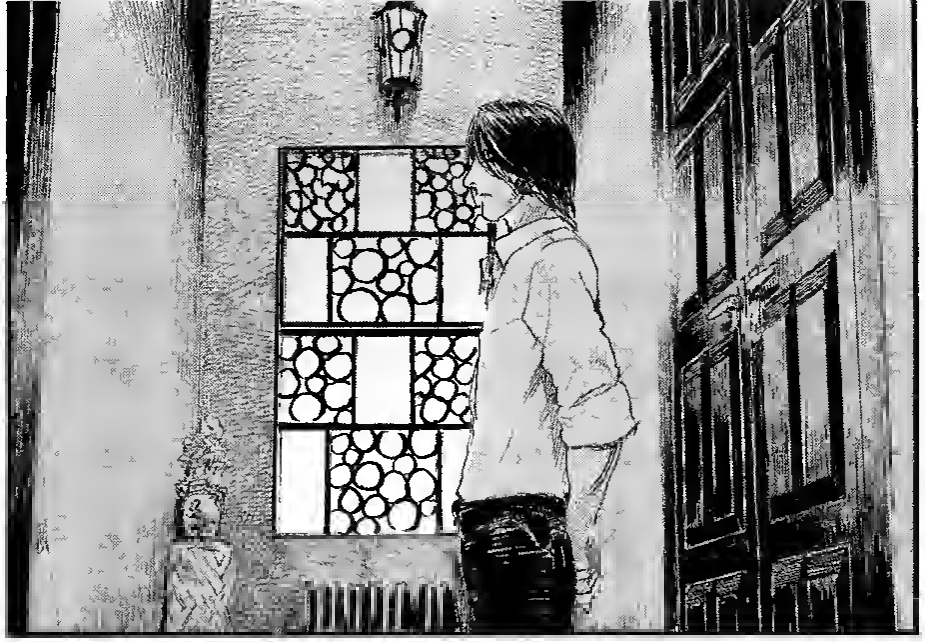

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BACK AND LEGS
...! INJURED MY LUMBAR VERTEBRA
IN AN ACCIDENT WHEN I WAS ONE YEAR OLD...

...YOU'RE A STRANGE WOMAN...
MY LEGS WOULDN'T WORK FROM THAT DAY FORWARD
THEY WERE A HINDRANCE SO I CUT THEM OFF
Thud
...YOU'VE PUT ME OFF

IS THAT WHAT YOU THOUGHT I'D SAY?
DO YOU THINK I'D BE A INTER-ROGATOR
IF I WAS PUT OFF BY SUCH A SMALL THING?


WHY DIDN'T YOU TWO RUN AWAY?
BELKA
DID YOU HAVE YOUR SIGHTS ON THIS HOUSE SPECIFICALLY?
WERE YOU NOT JUST SEARCHING FOR A HOUSE?
WHY WAS YOUR WHEELCHAIR MADE SO THAT YOU CAN'T MOVE IT BY YOURSELF?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO SHCHENOK IN THE INTEROGATION ROOM?
WHY ARE YOU USING FALSE NAMES?

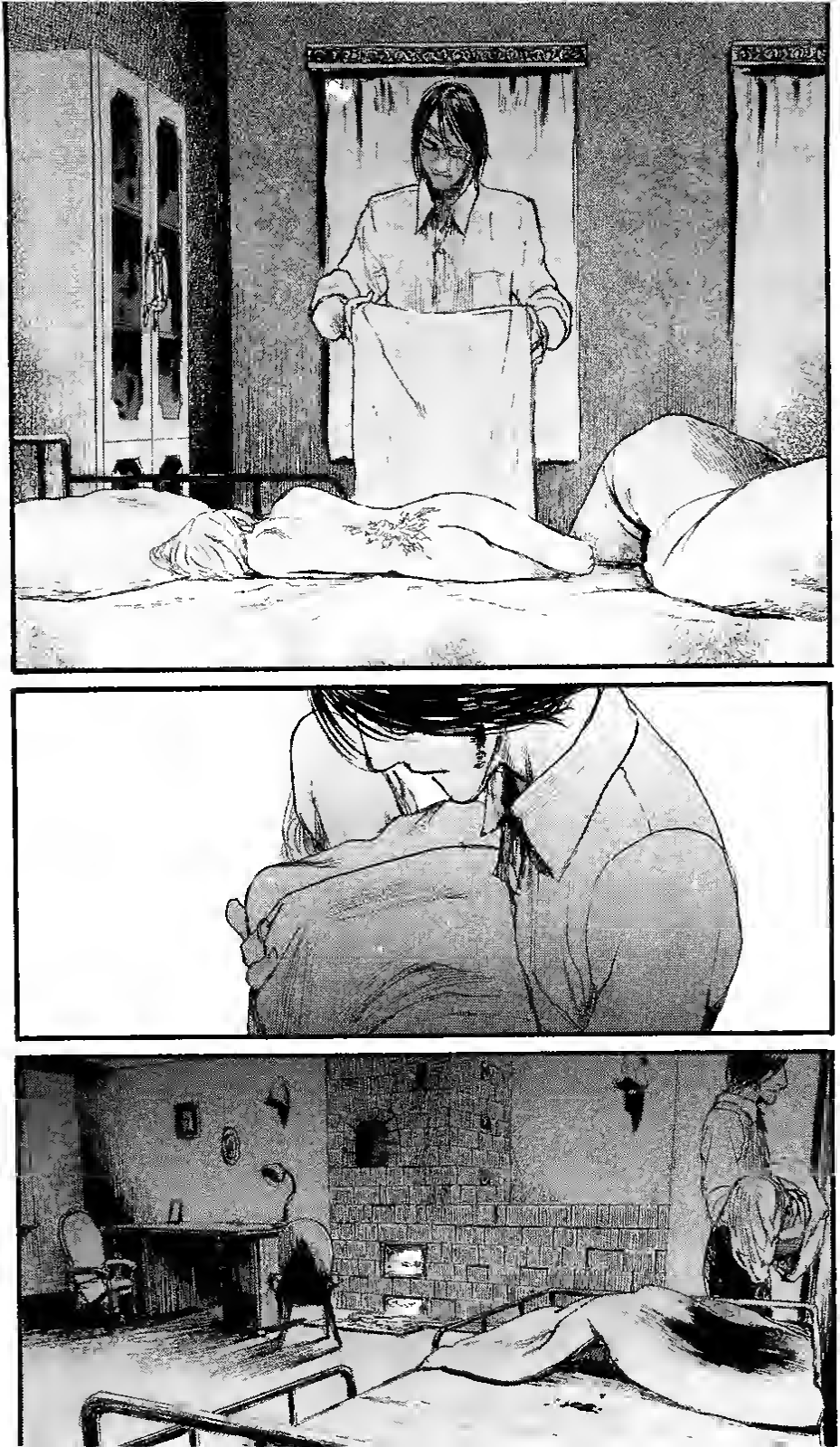
WHO ARE
YOU TWO?

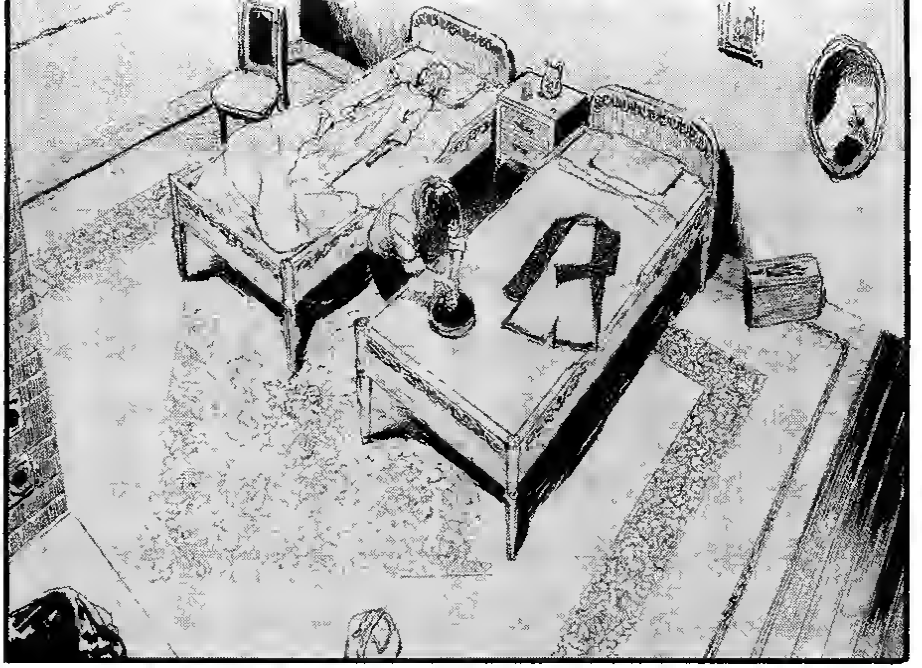


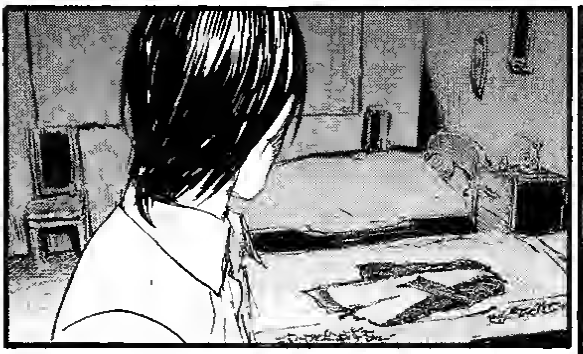
CLICK

AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, REMAKE THE BED
LOOK AFTER HER

...SHE PASSED OUT







.....
.....
SHCHENOK

SO PLEASE LOOK AFTER ME...
I THINK THE SAME THING WILL HAPPEN TOMORROW
SHUT

CHAPTER 3
THE SQUIRREL AND PUPPY'S DREAM

NOW
LOOK INTO MY EYES
LISTEN TO ONLY MY VOICE, LIKE ALWAYS...
SAFE... SECURE...
YOUR PAIN... YOUR SUFFERING, WERE NEVER THERE TO BEGIN WITH

SO
REST...

CHEEP CHEEP

SHCHENOK
SHUSH!
A PACKAGE JUST ARRIVED... HELP UNLOAD IT
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO SLEEP FOR?
YOU'RE GOING TO USE THIS NOW, BELKA
AND GO WAKE BELKA UP

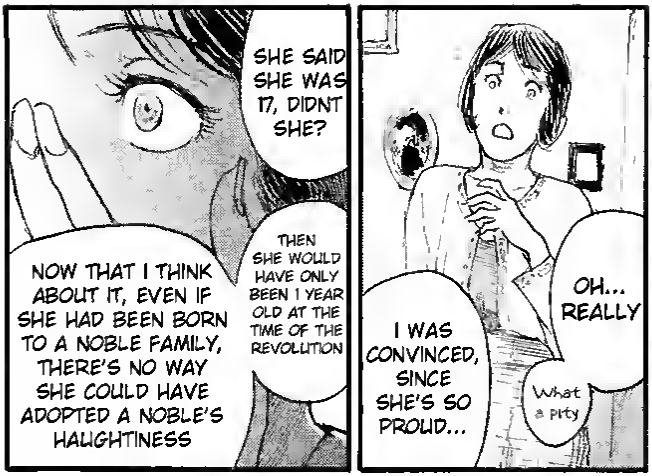
PUT THAT DEFECTIVE ONE IN THE BARN OR SOMETHING
YOU'LL BE HELPING VALENTINA WITH THE COOKING AND HANGING OUT THE WASHING IN THE GARDEN FROM NOW ON
IT'S OUTRAGEOUS THAT YOU'RE TROUBLING SOMEONE USEFUL AS A LABOURER JUST TO MOVE ROOM TO ROOM
WE'LL PUT IN A SLOPE AT THE KITCHEN DOOR
IT'S BEST FOR YOU TOO
...IT'S OKAY

...WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
COULD YOU TAKE THAT WHEEL-CHAIR UP THE THE SECOND FLOOR?
WELL THEN, VIKTOR STEPANOVICH MIKHALKOV
THE THINGS I COULD DO, SUCH AS MAKING BEDS AND CLEANING THE PECH, WOULD INCREASE
IF I COULD MOVE FREELY TO THE SECOND FLOOR
...I TOLD YOU, YOUR JOBS ARE HELPING WITH COOKING AND WASHING
DON'T YOU WANT TO GO OUT IN THE GARDEN?
IS IMPOSSIBLE
WITHOUT SHCHENOK'S ASSISTANCE, MOVING AROUND ON THE EARTH

.....
.....
.....
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

I'M COMING!
YOU HAVE A DELIVERY
BRRRRR
OH! SHCHENOK
THERE'S A LETTER FOR YOU TWO
BELKA!
!
CLICK
IT WAS ONLY SENT YESTER-DAY
WHEN DID YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO TELL YOUR FRIEND THIS ADDRESS?

I'LL BRING YOU A FIRE IRON
IT'S A LITTLE BIT EARLY IN THE YEAR TO BE DOING THAT
ARE YOU CLEANING THE PECH?
OH! I SEE
AND THEN YOU WERE TAKEN BY THE OGPU, WEREN'T YOU?
WHEN WE WERE LIVING HERE SECRETLY BEFORE...
Stare
.. THIS IS HARD TO DO
IT'S ABOUT BELKA
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SHCHENOK? WERE YOU HER OLD SERVANT?
IS SHE FROM A NOBLE FAMILY?
HER NAME SOUNDS LIKE AN ALIAS
HEY! HEY! HEY! HEY!
CAN YOU ANSWER A QUESTION? I'LL KEEP IT SECRET

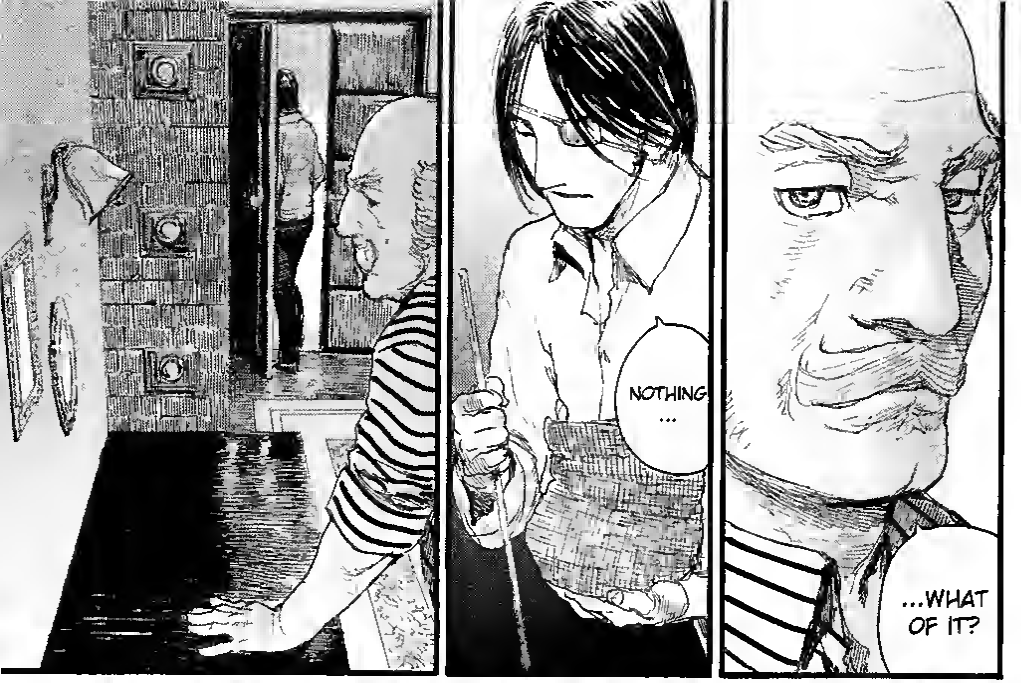

SHE SAID SHE WAS 17, DIDNT SHE?
THEN SHE WOULD HAVE ONLY BEEN 1 YEAR OLD AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, EVEN IF SHE HAD BEEN BORN TO A NOBLE FAMILY, THERE'S NO WAY SHE COULD HAVE ADOPTED A NOBLE'S HAUGHTINESS
OH... REALLY
I WAS CONVINCED, SINCE SHE'S SO PROUD...
What a pity

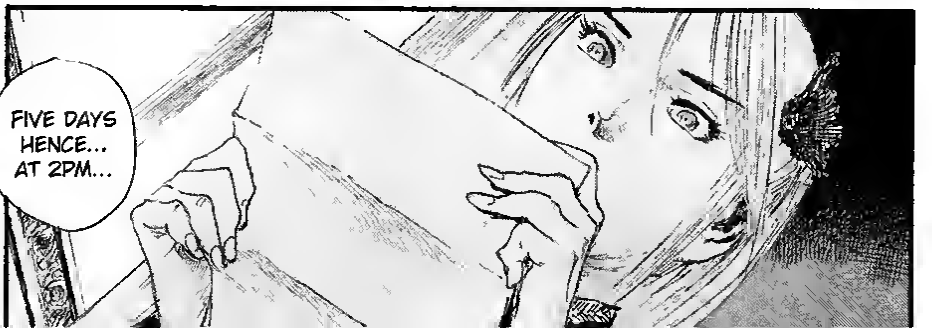
HAHAHA HA...
AH! I'LL KEEP THIS A SECRET FROM MIKHALKOV
HOWEVER! SHE MUST HAVE ALWAYS WISHED TO BE ONE! RIGHT?

Another dream smashed
HMM...
NOTHING SPECIAL, WE'RE JUST A NORMAL... BIG SISTER AND LITTLE BROTHER
THEN WHAT'S YOUR RELATION-SHIP?
NO
BELKA WAS NEVER AN ARISTOCRAT
AND I WAS NEVER AN EMPLOYEE OF A NOBLE FAMILY

WHAT?
YOU MEAN BIG BROTHER AND LITTLE SISTER, RIGHT?
BECAUSE YOU LOOK MUCH OLDER THAN HER...
.....
.....
AGE IS GETTING THE BETTER OF ME...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
CLEANING SOOT FROM THE PECH...
HMPH... I THOUGHT THIS WOULD HAPPEN
DIDN'T BELKA SAY EARLIER THAT SHE'D DO IT?
OR RATHER,
THERE'S NO NEED FOR THAT! IT'S NOT THE SEASON FOR IT YET
THAT'S A PHOTO OF A COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE HUSSAR, ISN'T IT?


NOTHING...
...WHAT OF IT?


FIVE DAYS HENCE... AT 2PM...

Let's walk through the forest
Let's rest for a while
Under the shade of the oak
Ai lyu lyu lyu li
Lyushenki, lyu li
MARSHA

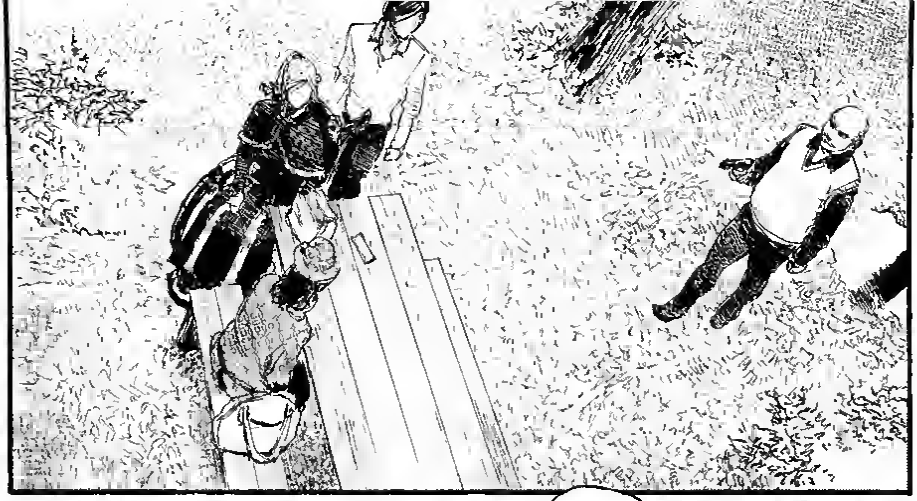
Squeeze
MY LITTLE SQUIRREL
OW! YOU'RE SQUEEZING TOO HARD!
EVEN IN MY DREAMS I'M NOT THAT LUCKY
IT DOESN'T BELONG TO US
YOU GOT YOUR HANDS ON THAT DACHA SO QUICKLY
THINGS WENT WELL!
WHAT!?
WE'VE ENDED UP LIVING WITH A MEMBER OF THE OGPU...
I ACTUALLY THINK WE WERE TOO IMPATIENT AND MADE A MISTAKE

TORTURED !?
NOTHING WAS DONE TO ME...
SHCHENOK WAS... TORTURED ...
DID SOME-THING HAPPEN?
MARSHA
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME... DO YOU HAVE WHAT WAS GIVEN TO YOU?
YOU... REALLY ARE AMAZING
IS YOUR BODY...
...ER...
ONLY BECAUSE BELKA WAS THERE...

THIS IS FROM YOUR MOTHER
THESE TWO ARE FROM DR BADMAEV
IF FATHER REALLY WAS WORRIED, HE'D BE AT THAT DACHA INSTEAD OF US
HE WOULDN'T ADMIT IT, BUT YOUR STEPFATHER DOES TOO
SHE WORRIES ABOUT YOU
IS MY MOTHER WELL?
YOU REALLY ARE...
GEEZ...

Замри!!
DON'T MOVE!!

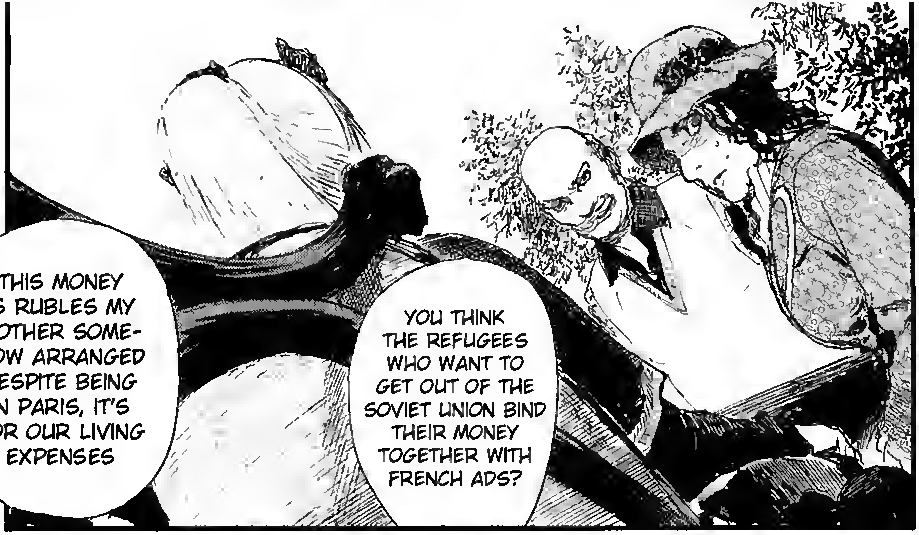
!!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE... NO SUDDEN MOVEMENTS



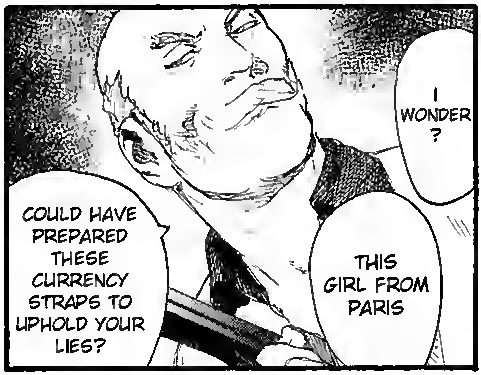
*NOW MEDVEZHYEGORSK

WHICH MEANS, BELKA
YOUR PARENTS', AND CONSEQUENTLY YOUR, ACTUAL RESIDENCE IS IN PARIS!
MEDVEZHYE GORA IS A STONE'S THROW AWAY FROM HERE... YOU WOULDN'T ASK ANOTHER PERSON HOW FAMILY MEMBERS ARE IF THEY LIVED SO CLOSE
YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT YOUR PARENTS JUST NOW
HEHE HE...!
PARIS? DID YOU SAY PARIS!?
HE SAID IT WOULD BE USELESS TO INTERROGATE A WOMAN WHO WOULD ASK TO BE TORTURED. GIVE THEM SOME FREEDOM, HE SAID, AND WAIT FOR TO CONTACT SOMEONE
COMRADE BOLONEV WAS RIGHT
HEHE...
SO THAT YOU CAN INTRODUCE THE REFUGEES TO SEA ROUTES FROM FINLAND THAT AVOID GOING THROUGH LENINGRAD...HOW AM I DOING?
YOU'RE FIXATED ON PETROZAVODSK BECAUSE YOU WANT AN INTERCHANGE
YOU'RE AIDING AND ABETTING REFUGEES BY SECURING THEM A ROUTE TO FRANCE

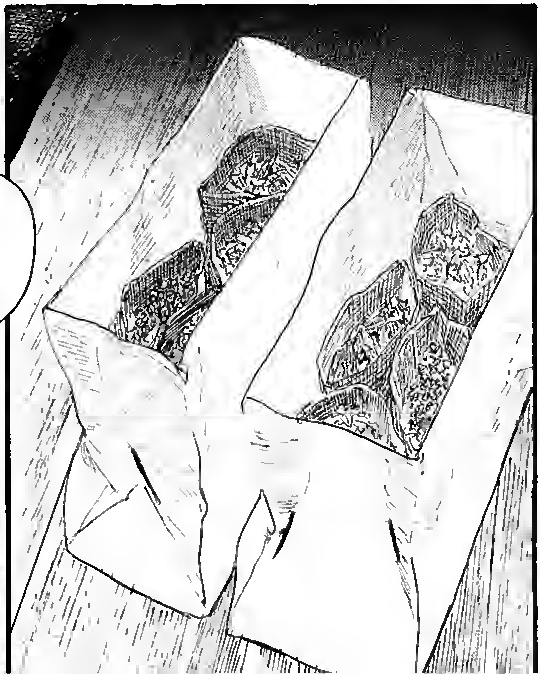
*INK BLOTTING PAPER MADE IN FRANCE SIMULTANEOUSLY USED AS ADVERTISEMENTS FOR BUSINESSES


THIS MONEY IS RUBLES MY MOTHER SOMEHOW ARRANGED DESPITE BEING IN PARIS, IT'S FOR OUR LIVING EXPENSES
YOU THINK THE REFUGEES WHO WANT TO GET OUT OF THE SOVIET UNION BIND THEIR MONEY TOGETHER WITH FRENCH ADS?

SHCHENOK, OPEN THOSE PAPER BAGS


I WONDER?
THIS GIRL FROM PARIS
COULD HAVE PREPARED THESE CURRENCY STRAPS TO UPHOLD YOUR LIES?

THIS IS...
IT COULDN'T BE... CANNABIS!?

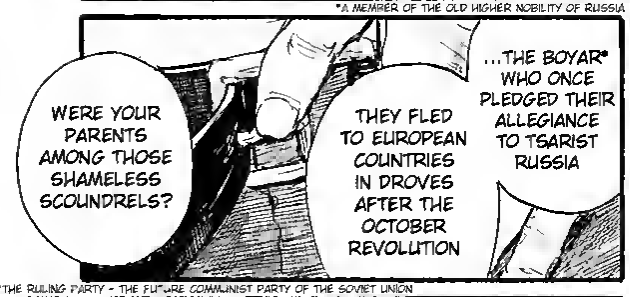


SHCHENOK MUST HAVE IT TO SUPPRESS THE SEIZURES CAUSED BY HIS CHRONIC DISEASE
THIS TIME MARIS JUST HAPPENED TO STOP BY THAT DOCTOR'S CLINIC, SO SHE DELIVERED IT TO ME
A DOCTOR WELL-VERSED IN THE SECRET MEDICINAL ARTS OF TIBET SENDS IT TO ME AT FIXED INTERVALS
PLEASE TAKE SOME AND SMELL IT
IT'S A NATURAL REMEDY
Sniff

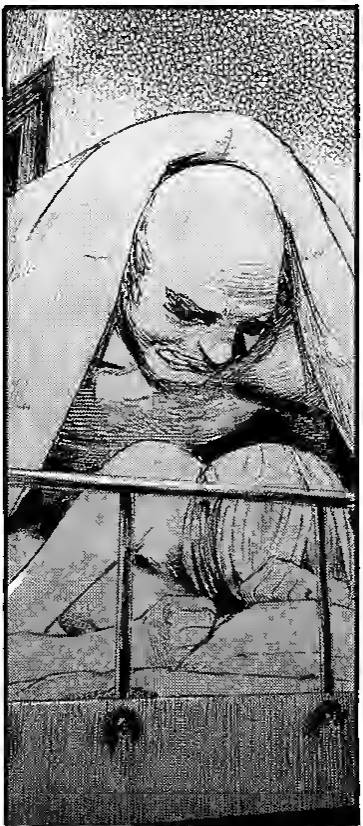
HIDE YOUR TRACKS BETTER IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE LOCKED AWAY IN LUBYANKA'S BASEMENT
IF YOU THINK THIS SOOTHES MY DOUBTS YOU'RE SERIOUSLY MISTAKEN
...HMPH
...MATRYONA
IT'S NO USE BLAMING VALENTIA... SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN HIS EMPLOYEE
...VALENTIA?
SHE PROBABLY SHOWED MIKHALKOV THE LETTER BEFORE SHE PASSED IT ON TO US...

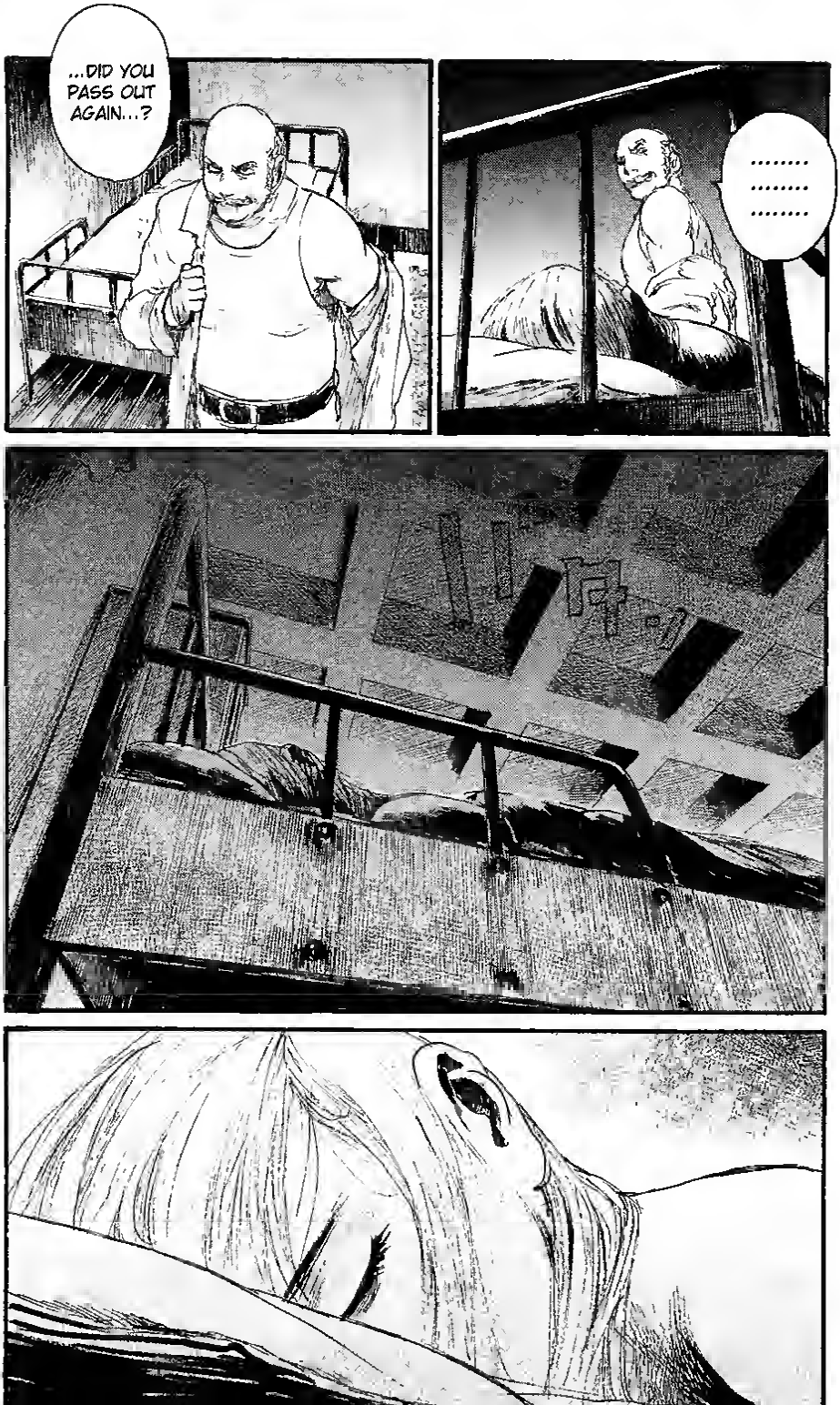
BUT I GUESS I CAN'T REALLY DRIFT AROUND AIMLESSLY
SINCE I'M A WOMAN WHO FLED TO PARIS AFTER MY PARENT AND SIBLINGS WERE KILLED
AND MY HUSBAND WAS A SPY
THERE ARE SO MANY PLACES I'D LIKE TO GO...
SINCE YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY, HOW ABOUT WE GO SEE KIZHI ISLAND?
BOATS GO THERE FROM PETROZA-VODSK
THAT'S TRUE...
MATRYONA, HUH? I HAVEN'T HEARD THAT NAME IN A WHILE
THAT'S WHAT THEY USED TO CALL ME... MY FATHER TOO

*A MEMBER OF THE OLD HIGHER NOBILITY OF RUSSIA



*THE RULING PARTY - THE FUTURE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION




...DID YOU PASS OUT AGAIN...?
.....
.....
.....

OH! DR BADMAEV!
SQUIRRELS ARE NATURALLY WARY... THAT'S QUITE IMPRESSIVE
HAS THE CURIOUS POWER TO MAKE OTHER PEOPLE FEEL SAFE
PERHAPS IT RUNS IN THE BLOOD...
YOUR GAZE...
I CAN BARELY BELIEVE I USED TO BE CARRIED AROUND
YOU'VE ALMOST MANAGED TO WALK

HE'S A SUPERIOR DOCTOR TO THE ONE WHO FIRST OPERATED ON YOUR VERTEBRA
MY LITTLE SQUIRREL... I'VE BROUGHT AN OLD FRIEND WITH ME TODAY
... REALLY ?
TO WALK LIKE I AM BY NEXT YEAR
YOU'LL BE ABLE
IF YOU TRUST HIM
HE'S ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF GERMAN MEDICAL TREATMENT
THERE WILL NO LONGER ANY ADULT WHO CAN HURT YOU
IF IT'S TRUE

IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I'M DRAGGED AWAY BY THE BOLSHEVIKS
SONYA

I CAN FEEL IT... THE CHEKA* HAVE BEEN PROWLING AROUND MY PRACTICE LATELY
SO... I WANT TO DO AS MUCH AS I CAN NOW
AS THE TSAR'S LAST SERVANT... DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
*PRECURSOR TO THE KGB
I'M LEAVING MY AFFAIRS AFTER MY DEATH TO MY NEPHEW
HE WILL CARRY ON MY STUDIES OF SECRET MEDICINAL HERBS
WHEN THE GIRL'S SUTURES HAVE CLOSED UP, THAT MAN WILL COME TO GET HER
...THIS IS A CRUEL PARTING GIFT...
TOO CRUEL ...

SCRITCH
SCRITCH
GOODBYE...
BELKA...

CHAPTER 4

THE SQUIRREL AND PUPPY'S BLOOD

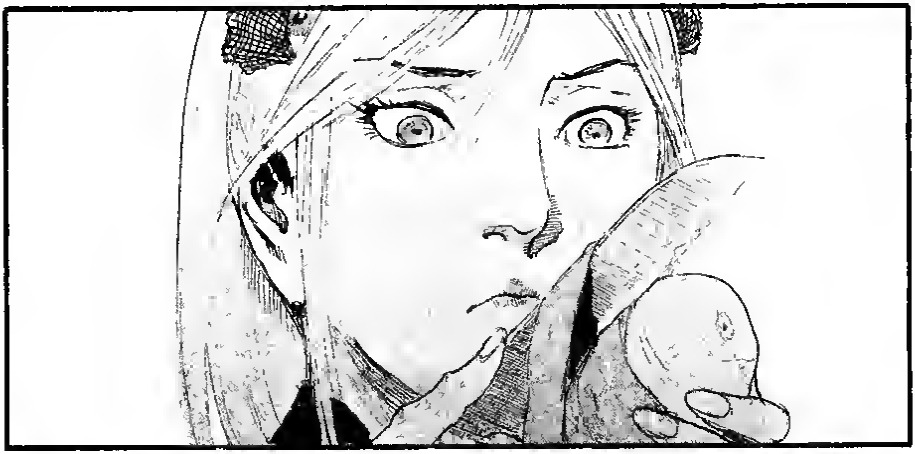
MY DEAR MR MENZHINSKY ...

NO, YOU DIDN'T COME BACK HERE TO CAUSE HARM TO RUSSIA
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME TO LOWER MY GUN?
WELL, I SUPPOSE WE'RE HERE FOR THE SAME REASONS

YOU WOULDN'T TAX YOUR WEAK CONSTITUTION AND COME OUT JUST TO GET IN THE WAY OF THAT, WOULD YOU?
THAT'S TRUE... I ONLY WANT TO RECOVER THE REMBRANDT PAINTING THAT BELONGS TO ME
IT ALL CAME UNDER CONTROL OF THE PARTY AFTER THE REVOLUTION
...AND ANY OTHER PROPERTY NO LONGER EXISTS IN THIS COUNTRY
YOUR PAINTING
HOW CAN YOU STAND IT, AS SOME-ONE WHO CAME FROM NOBILITY!?
TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO FINANCE STALIN'S FIVE YEAR PLANS
I HEARD A RUMOUR THAT THE PARTY IS SELLING OFF ALL THE HERMITAGE'S ARTWORKS
I DON'T WANT TO SAY THIS, MY DEAR MR MENZHINSKY ...BUT I CAME BACK HERE KNOWING THE RISKS

"YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF"
...IS THAT WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO SAY?
WE HAVE TO FEED THE PEOPLE... YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND, YOU ABANDONED THIS COUNTRY
...I THOUGHT YOU'D BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND
I DON'T HAVE ANY PROOF THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN SPYING IN THIS COUNTRY
PLEASE DON'T THINK I'M LIKE YOU
...WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
YOU CAN SET GUARDS TO WATCH ME UNTIL I LEAVE THE COUNTRY IF YOU LIKE
I RECOVERED MY PAINTING... I CAN'T BEAR STAYING TOO LONG IN THIS COUNTRY
HOME

SINCE I'M HERE, I SHOULD GO AND SEE MY STEPDAUGHTER BEFORE I LEAVE
OOH!



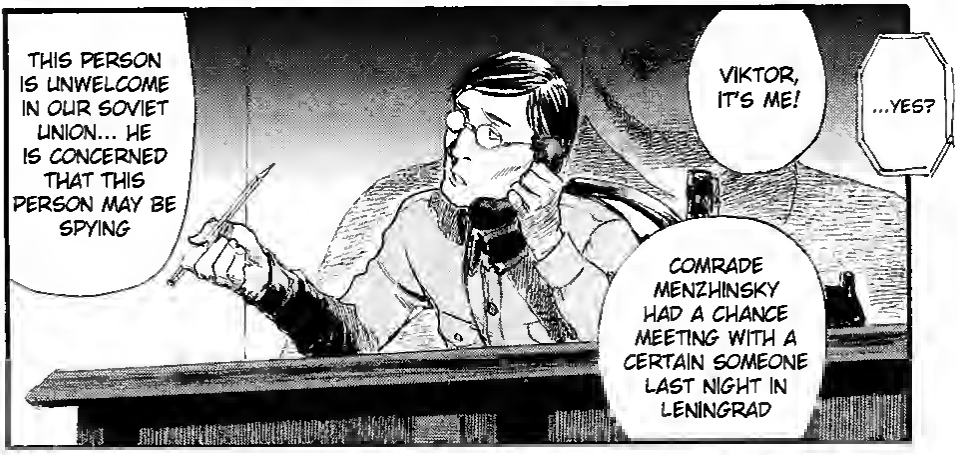
You used a knife again
OH, GOOD WORK
COULD YOU GRATE THE CHEESE NEXT?
I'M FINISHED, VALENTINA

Sorare Sorare Sorare
The smetana has to be eaten today

*RESTRICTIONS FOR LIVING DURING CERTAIN PERIODS FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS. IN THIS CASE IT'S REFERRING TO WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY BEING FAST DAYS IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. AFTER THE REVOLUTION, PURIFICATION ITSELF WAS PROHIBITED AS PART OF RELIGIOUS REPUDIATION

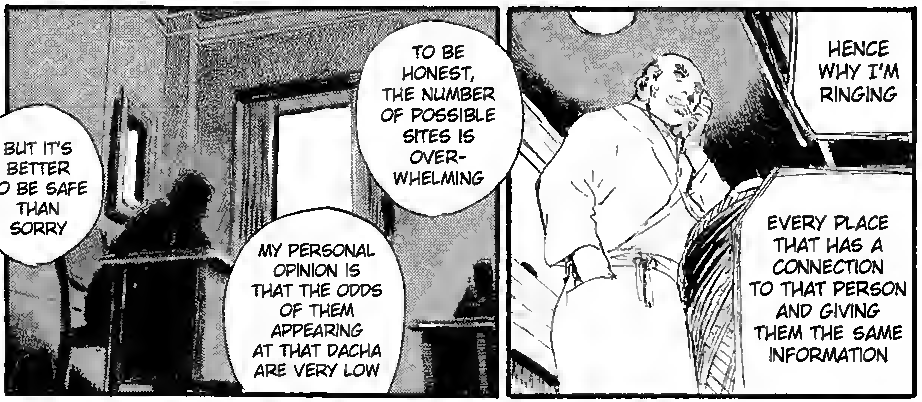
I STILL HAVEN'T LEARNT ANYTHING ABOUT THIS DACHA
LIKE
WHO BUILT IT... OR WHO WAS THE ORIGINAL OWNER...
I SHOULD AT LEAST FIND THAT OUT
HEHE...
IF BOLONEV KNEW I WAS ONLY ASKING THAT NOW HE'D GIVE ME HELL ...
Slap
...WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THIS BEFORE?
Slap
BELKA CONTINUES TO STAY IN THIS DACHA
SINCE QUESTIONING HER ABOUT THE REASON FOR THAT...

BRING!
SHOCK
Click
.....
.....


THIS PERSON IS UNWELCOME IN OUR SOVIET UNION... HE IS CONCERNED THAT THIS PERSON MAY BE SPYING
VIKTOR, IT'S ME!
...YES?
COMRADE MENZHINSKY HAD A CHANCE MEETING WITH A CERTAIN SOMEONE LAST NIGHT IN LENINGRAD

IF IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GOING TO CONTACT SOMEONE I WANT YOU TO RESTRAIN THAT PERSON.
WHEN YOU DO SO, CONTACT THE KARELIAN SOVIETS FOR SUPPORT...
INFORM ME IF YOU CATCH SIGHT OF THEM
THERE'S A CHANCE THIS INIDIVIDUAL MAY STOP BY YOUR DACHA

OK...
BUT... WHY WOULD THEY COME TO THIS REMOTE PLACE?
THAT DACHA BELONGED TO THEM UNTIL 15 YEARS AGO
COMRADE MENZHINSKY HAD SET GUARDS ON THAT PERSON OF COURSE
BUT THEY GAVE THEM THE SLIP

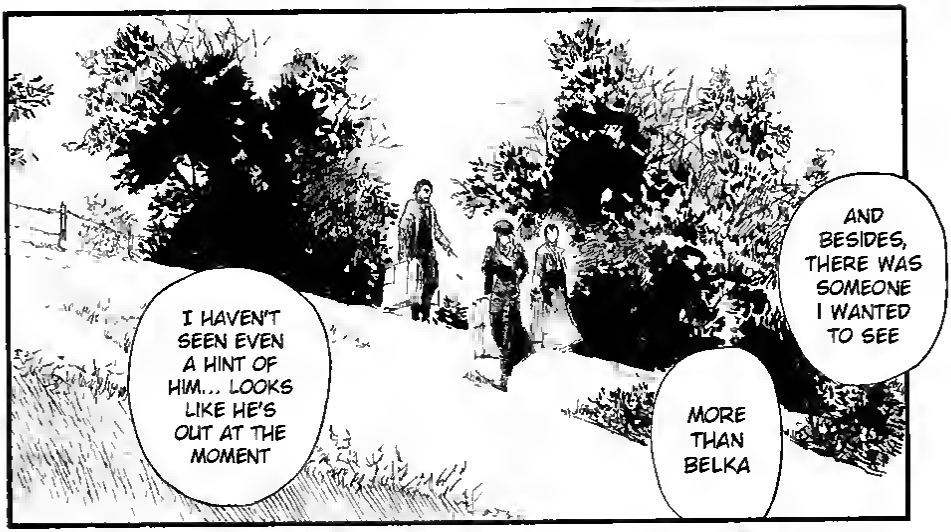

HENCE WHY I'M RINGING
EVERY PLACE THAT HAS A CONNECTION TO THAT PERSON AND GIVING THEM THE SAME INFORMATION
TO BE HONEST, THE NUMBER OF POSSIBLE SITES IS OVER-WHELMING
MY PERSONAL OPINION IS THAT THE ODDS OF THEM APPEARING AT THAT DACHA ARE VERY LOW
BUT IT'S BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY

THEY'RE 45 YEARS OLD BUT LOOK MUCH YOUNGER... THEY'RE A PERSON WITH A STARTLINGLY VERSATILE FACE
THEIR NAME IS

...THE BLOOD STILL HASN'T COME OUT COMPLETELY...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN ALMOST 2 MONTHS...

SHUT

I CAN'T EXACTLY GO KNOCK ON THE DOOR
YOU'RE DONE ALREADY?
ALRIGHT, LET'S GO BACK


I HAVEN'T SEEN EVEN A HINT OF HIM... LOOKS LIKE HE'S OUT AT THE MOMENT
MORE THAN BELKA
AND BESIDES, THERE WAS SOMEONE I WANTED TO SEE

STALIN'S LIABLE TO DO ANYTHING...
I'M SCARED THEY'LL TARGET US EVEN AFTER WE GET OUT OF RUSSIA
HEHE... IF WE ANNOY THE SECRET POLICE TOO MUCH

DO YOU HAVE SOME BUSINESS WITH THE HOUSEHOLD OVER THERE?

PUT DOWN YOUR GUNS
!!
LOWER YOUR GUNS
PUT THE SAFETY BACK ON!
HURRY!
カチッ

...I'M SO GLAD
ALLOW ME TO CALL YOU "SHCHENOK" NOW
PLEASE
TO SEE YOU LOOKING WELL
...IS THAT YOU...?

I HEARD FROM MARIA... YOU'RE LIVING TOGETHER WITH AN OGPU MEMBER
I'M SORRY...
IT'S BEEN TWO MONTHS BUT WE STILL HAVEN'T MADE ANY PROGRESS IN OUR SEARCH...
THEN IT'S UNDER-STANDABLE
IT MAY BE IN THE PERIPHERAL GROVE OF TREES... OR IT COULD BE HIDDEN NEAR THE LAKE SHORE
LEAVING THAT ASIDE.. I TOLD YOU THIS IN PARIS AS WELL
IT CERTAINLY WOULD MAKE IT... DIFFICULT...
IF THAT'S THE CASE, I THINK YOU SHOULD ABANDON THE SEARCH
...SHE
IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU CAME BACK WITH ME NOW...
BUT I STILL
OPPOSE GETTING YOU WRAPPED UP IN THIS SEARCH

...YOU GIVE PRECED-ENCE
TO BEING KIND TO THOSE CLOSE TO YOU OVER JUSTICE
THAT'S HOW YOU ARE...
BUT... I WAS DRAWN TO YOUR FATHER TOO
FOR BETTER OR WORSE
YOU'RE VERY SIMILAR TO YOUR FATHER
HE WAS...
YES?
JUST AS BELKA IS MY LIFE
I WILL CONTINUE TO BE HER LEGS FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE
I'VE MADE UP MY MIND... I DON'T INTEND TO YIELD THAT DUTY TO ANYONE

...?
SH!
CRACK
YOU OVER THERE!
BANG

MY COMRADE HAS SEEN YOU
COME DOWN
THROW AWAY YOUR GUN
RUSTLE

I'LL DO IT AT THE SAME TIME AS YOU...
NO
JUST YOU
I'D HAVE THE AUTHORITY NEEDED TO SHOOT YOUR COMPANIONS WITHOUT ORDERS
AND I DON'T THINK...
GIVEN ORDERS TO SHOOT YOU
...I WAS NEVER
TMP
THESE TWO ARE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE FROM THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY
YES
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US FROM MENZHINSKY OR BOLONEV?

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY IS CURRENTLY IN FLUX... SINCE THE BANISHMENT OF THE TROTSKYISTS, IT'S BEEN BREAKING UP INTO SECTS. THERE ARE EVEN SOME WHO ARE TRYING TO RECONCILE WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY ON THE PRETENSE OF ANTI-FACISM
KILLING US FOR A STUPID REASON AT A TIME LIKE THIS
WOULD CREATE A RIFT BETWEEN THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE ALL-UNION COMMUNIST PARTY* THAT WOULD PLEASE NO ONE... ESPECIALLY NOT STALIN
*THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION
WELL, WHEN YOU LIVE IN PARIS FOR FIVE YEARS YOU CAN GET THESE KIND OF CONNECTIONS
I AM BY MY VERY NATURE IN CONFLICT WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY, BUT THESE TWO ARE EXILED NOBILITY .. THEY SYMPATHISED WITH MY PLIGHT AND ASSISTED ME
A NORMAL PERSON COULD LIVE IN PARIS FOR A DECADE
AND NEVER BE ABLE TO MAKE YOUR KIND OF CONNECTIONS
AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY SYMPATHISED, THEY COULDN'T MAKE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOLLOW THEM AROUND AS A SHIELD
THE REASON YOU CAN DO THAT
IS BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T AN ORDINARY NOBLE
THAT DACHA'S NAME...
"PROPERTY YU-92"
IT MEANS

THE 92ND PROPERTY
OF THE YUSUPOV FAMILY
IT'S EMBARRASSING TO ADMIT, BUT I ONLY LEARNT THAT YESTERDAY... PRINCE FELIX

OH, REALLY?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HAHA... OF COURSE NOT
THIS OUTFIT IS TO HIDE MY FIGURE
VIKTOR MIKHALKOV
HMM
...IS THAT KIND OF OLD-FASHIONED CLOTHING IN VOGUE IN PARIS?

WHY BELKA AND SHCHENOKA ARE FIXATED ON STAYING IN THAT DACHA
PRINCE YUSUPOV, I FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT EARLIER
THAT'S BECAUSE
YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN HIDDEN IN THAT DACHA. ISN'T THAT CORRECT?
I HEAR YOU'VE BEEN SNEAKING PEEKS AT THE PECH AND UNDER THE FLOOR WHILE I'M NOT LOOKING
SHCHENOK
THERE'S SOMETHING A LITTLE BIT STRANGE ABOUT THIS
IF THAT'S THE CASE... PRINCE YUSUPOV

...HEHE
DESPITE THIS BEING YOUR OWN PROPERTY
COULD IT BE A SIMPLE CASE OF FORGETFUL-NESS?
OR DID SOMEONE OUTSIDE YOUR FAMILY HIDE IT?
YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR SOME-THING THAT YOU DON'T YOURSELF KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF
YOU THINK YOU'RE SO CLEVER
IT'S ANNOYING ...
I HAVE NO INTENTIONS OF TELLING YOU ABOUT IT OF COURSE
JUST WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR?
IF THERE'S ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP...
THAT TOO
YOU CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO KNOW ABOUT IT

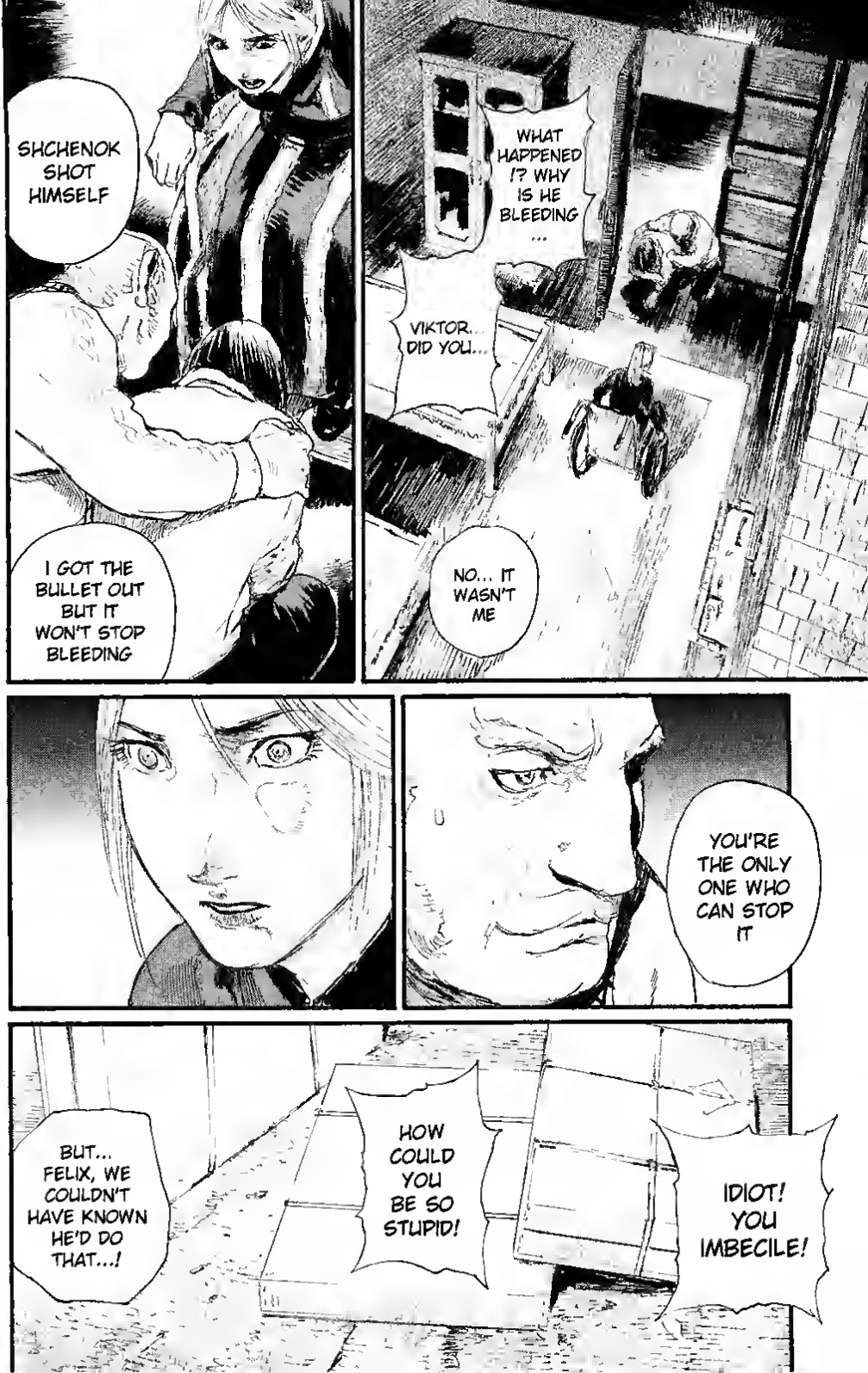
IF I REPORT THIS INCIDENT AFTER YOU'VE LEFT THE COUNTRY, BELKA AND SHCHENOK WILL BE TORTURED AGAIN
THE FACT YOU CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT TO A MEMBER OF THE OGPU
IS THE PROBLEM
EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING THEY'D DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT, RIGHT?
BUT I REFUSE TO LET ANYONE ELSE COME IN CONFLICT WITH IT
THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GREAT RUSSIA... IT'S A PRIVATE AFFAIR
I SWEAR ON THE YUSUPOV NAME
I'LL DISPOSE OF YOUR CORPSE IN A WAY THAT WON'T THROW SUSPICION UPON THOSE TWO

WHY... THOSE TWO?
CAN I ASK YOU ONE THING BEFORE I DIE?
...PRINCE YUSUPOV
I'M SURE YOU COULD HAVE ARRANGED FOR PEOPLE MORE SUITED TO THE TASK
AND A YOUNG MAN WITH A MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS
A LEGLESS GIRL

HE... SHCHENOK EVEN WENT SO FAR
AS TO HURT HIMSELF TO COERCE ME TO LET THEM...!
INDEED...! I WOULD IF I COULD
THOSE TWO PUT THEMSELVES FORWARD FOR THIS TASK
MIKHAL-KOV...
YOU SHOULD LET THOSE TWO GO NOW
WELL... THESE ARE YOUR FINAL MOMENTS. SHALL I LET YOU IN ON SOMETHING? BELKA HAS MORE OF A MOTIVE TO TAKE UP THIS JOB THAN ANYONE
IF SHE FINDS IT
THAT GIRL CAN TAKE PART IN A CERTAIN FANTASY
VIKTOR MIKHALKOV
DO SVIDANIYA
A FANTASY
THAT SHE WAS WANTED AND BORN INTO THIS WORLD
BY THE LOVE OF AN ORDINARY MAN AND WOMAN

I GUESS IT WAS A DREAM...
I THOUGHT I HEARD A GUNSHOT...
.....
.....

SLAM
SHCHENOK !!


SHCHENOK SHOT HIMSELF
I GOT THE BULLET OUT BUT IT WON'T STOP BLEEDING
WHAT HAPPENED !? WHY IS HE BLEEDING ...
VIKTOR... DID YOU...
NO... IT WASN'T ME
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN STOP IT
BUT... FELIX, WE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN HE'D DO THAT...!
HOW COULD YOU BE SO STUPID!
IDIOT! YOU IMBECILE!

WHY WOULD HE SHOOT HIS OWN ARM!?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HIS REASONING ...IF YOU CAN SHED SOME LIGHT, PLEASE DO
NO ONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED SHCHENOK WOULD STEAL THE GUN
PLEASE FORGIVE US, FELIX
I TRIED TO SHOOT HIM SO HE COULDN'T DO THAT
...MIKHALKOV WOULD HAVE REPORTED TO HIS SUPERIOR, AND BEEN TOLD TO TORTURE BOTH OF THEM
HE CHOSE THE PATH THAT WOULD DO THE MOST TO DIFFUSE THIS SITUATION
SO
SHCHENOK DIDN'T WISH FOR ANYONE ELSE'S BLOOD TO BE SHED IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIM

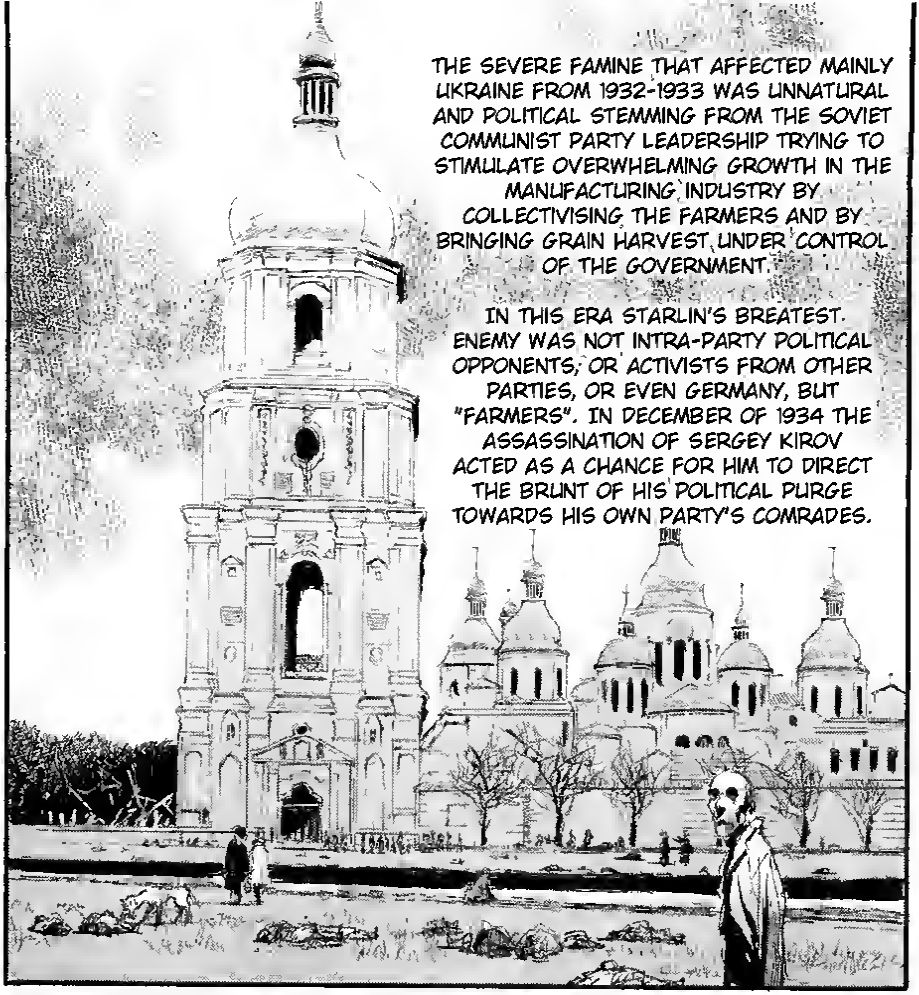
I CAN'T CALL A DOCTOR ...IN THIS COUNTRY ...
ONLY MY STEPDAUGHTER CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT *THAT*

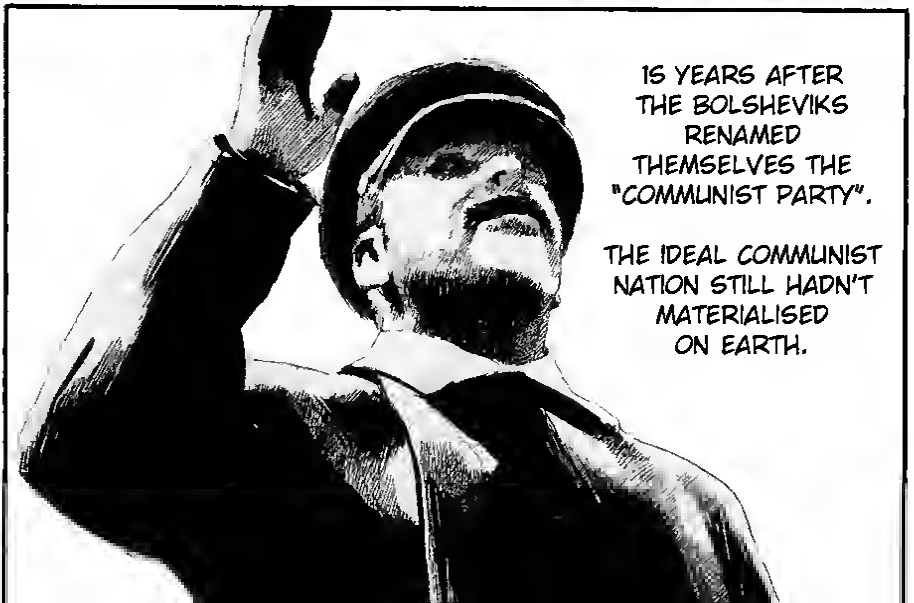
DAMN IT...
FWUMP!
HE WAS IN A SORRY STATE...
SHOULDN'T WE FOLLOW THAT BOY?

HEHE... GOOD GRIEF...

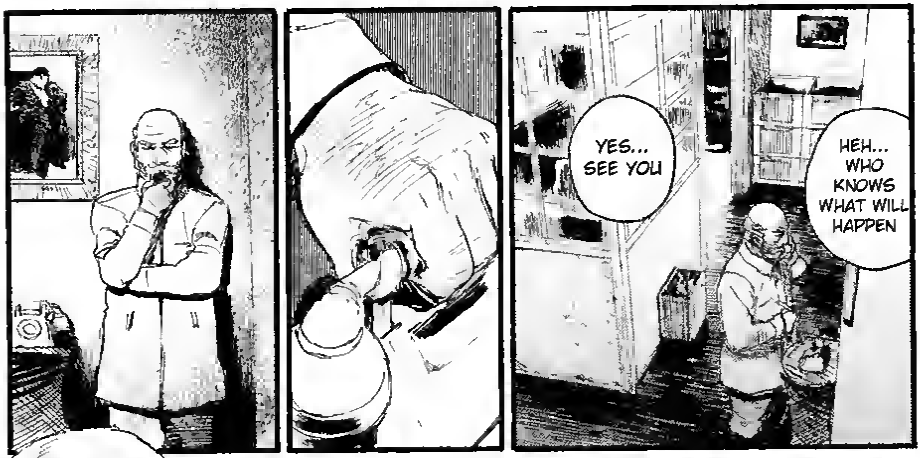
I REALLY AM AN INCOMPETENT FATHER

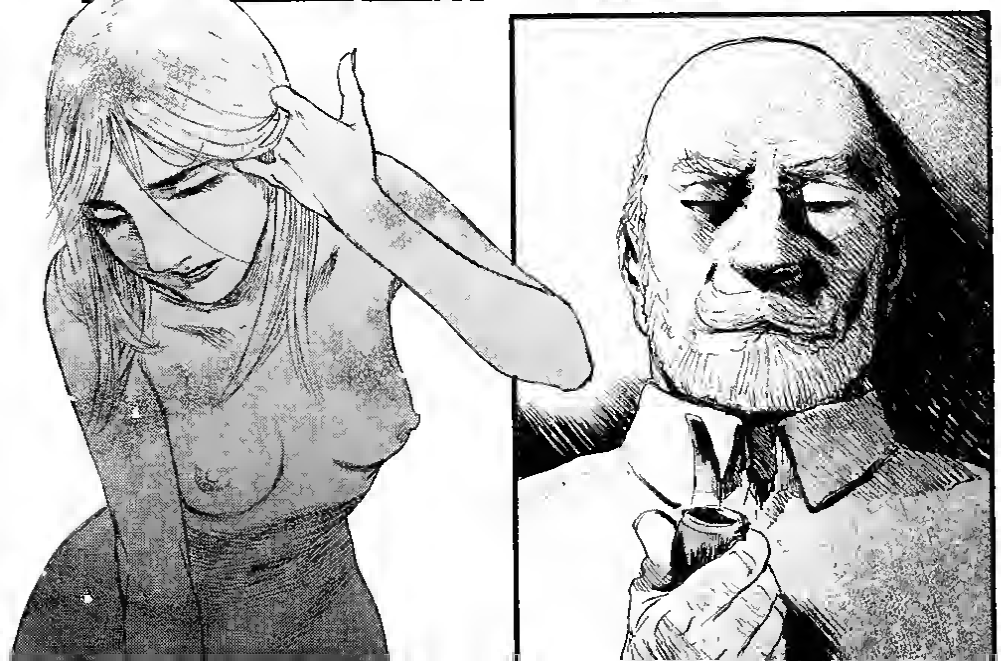
CHAPTER 5 THE SQUIRREL AND PUPPY'S WINTER

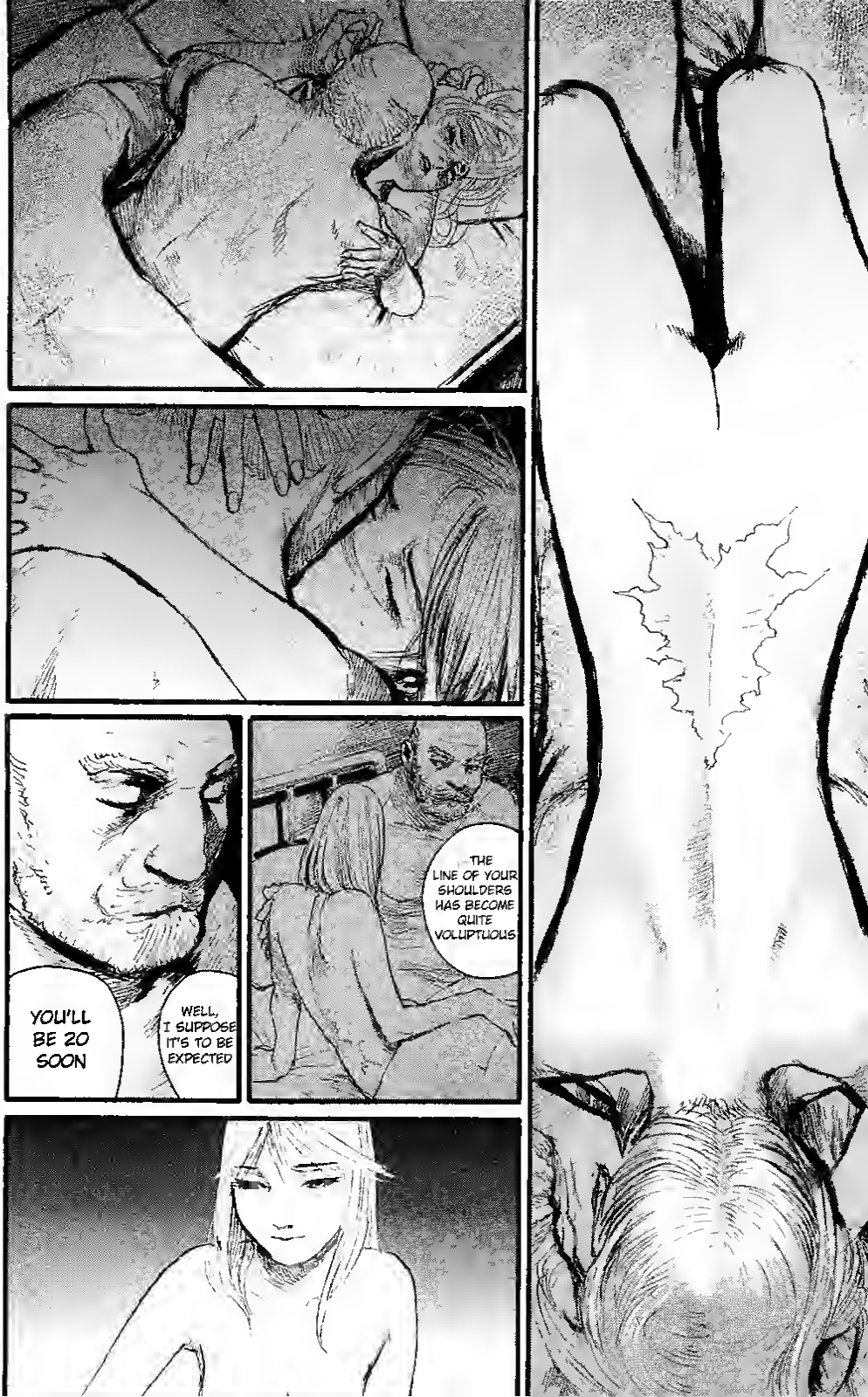

THE SEVERE FAMINE THAT AFFECTED MAINLY UKRAINE FROM 1932-1933 WAS UNNATURAL AND POLITICAL STEMMING FROM THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERSHIP TRYING TO STIMULATE OVERWHELMING GROWTH IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY BY COLLECTIVISING THE FARMERS AND BY BRINGING GRAIN HARVEST UNDER CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT.
IN THIS ERA STARLIN'S BREATEST ENEMY WAS NOT INTRA-PARTY POLITICAL OPPONENTS, OR ACTIVISTS FROM OTHER PARTIES, OR EVEN GERMANY, BUT "FARMERS". IN DECEMBER OF 1934 THE ASSASSINATION OF SERGEY KIROV ACTED AS A CHANCE FOR HIM TO DIRECT THE BRUNT OF HIS POLITICAL PURGE TOWARDS HIS OWN PARTY'S COMRADES.


15 YEARS AFTER THE BOLSHEVIKS RENAMED THEMSELVES THE "COMMUNIST PARTY".
THE IDEAL COMMUNIST NATION STILL HADN'T MATERIALISED ON EARTH.

THE SOVIET UNION - KARELSKAYA AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC -1936-



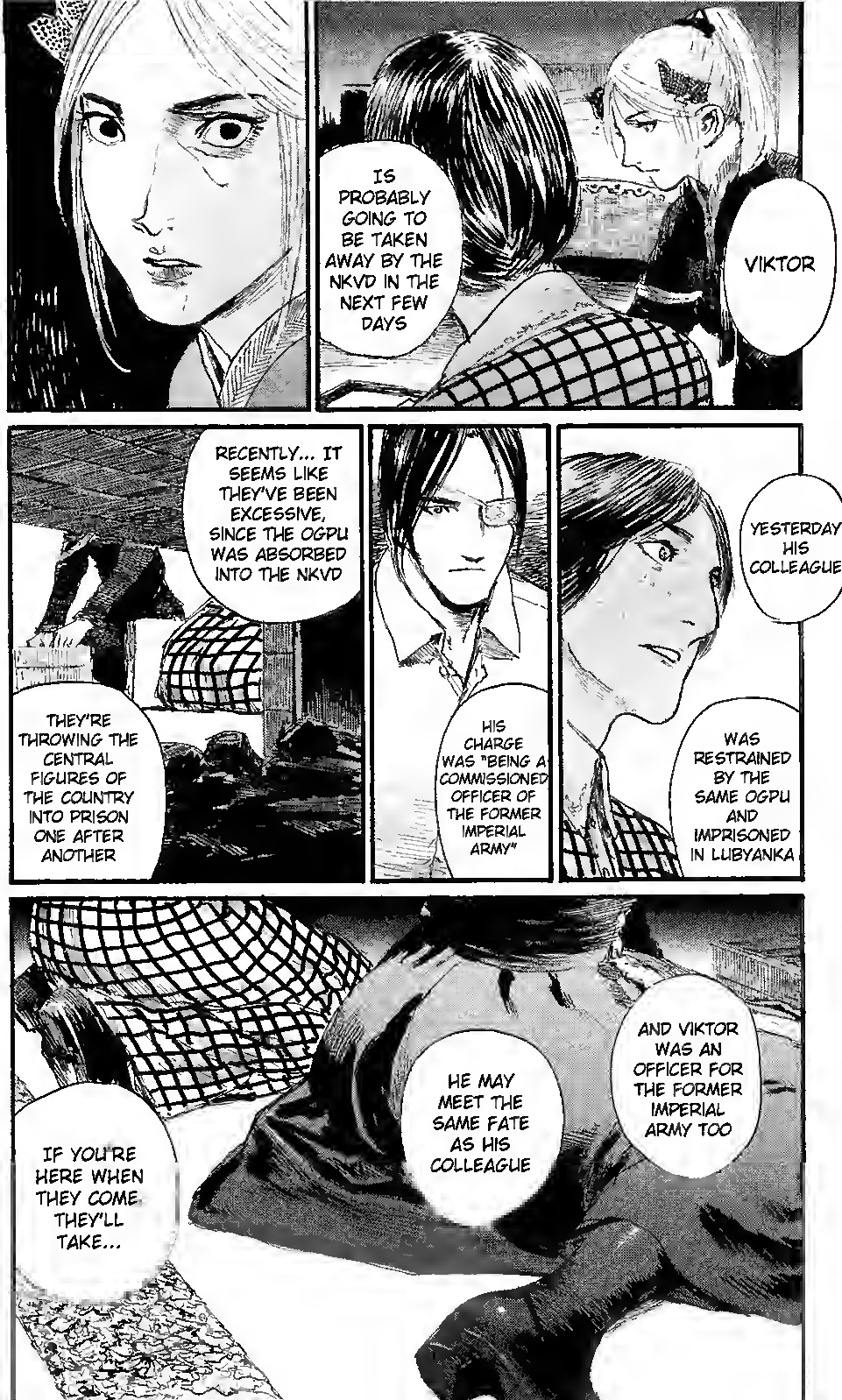



THE LINE OF YOUR SHOULDERS HAS BECOME QUITE VOLUPTUOUS
WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S TO BE EXPECTED
YOU'LL BE 20 SOON

... WHAT ...?
LEAVE HERE TOMORROW, BELKA
PACK YOUR BAGS TONIGHT
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY LARGE ITEMS, CORRECT?
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? GET OUT OF THIS BELKA... NO, GET OUT OF PETROZAVODSK COMPLETELY BEFORE TOMORROW NIGHT
IF YOU TWO ARE STILL IN THIS DACHA TOMORROW AFTER THE SUN HAS SET
HEHEHE ...
DID YOU THINK I'D GIVE YOU A COMING OF AGE PRESENT?
...THIS IS SO SUDDEN ...

YOU'VE COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN YOUR JOB
HMPH... YOU WERE TOO BUSY PLAYING NOBLES
I'LL SHOOT YOU
YOU AND SHCHENOK
TOOK UP A REQUEST FROM PRINCE YUSUPOV
I'VE GIVEN YOU 3 YEARS
BUT
I KNOW YOU STILL HAVEN'T FOUND WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR
YOU SETTLED DOWN IN THIS DACHA TO SEARCH FOR SOME-THING
YOUR VACATION HERE IS OVER

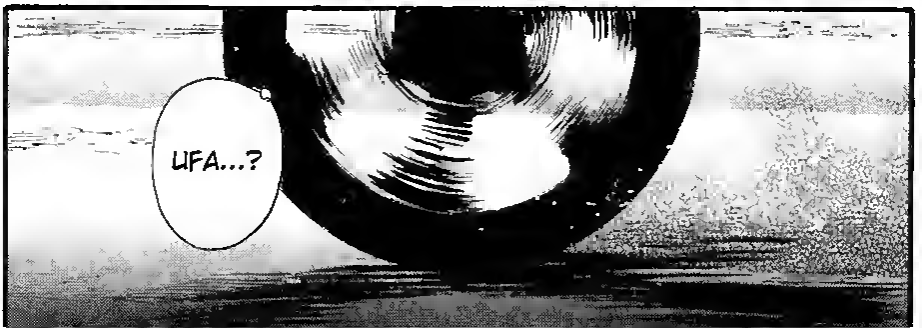
DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT, BELKA?
COME IN, VASHA
I HAVE SOME BREAD AND KVASS* I MADE
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE IT WITH YOU
WE'D LOVE TO
THIS IS VERY HARSH... ESPECIALLY IN THIS SEASON
*TRADITIONAL FERMENTED RUSSIAN DRINK
IT CAN'T BE HELPED... MIKHALKOV IS OGPU
AND WE'RE ILLEGAL RESIDENTS
WE ACTUALLY HAVE TO BE THANKFUL TO HIM FOR BRINGING US HERE AS SERVANTS 3 YEARS AGO
HE TOLD ME NOT TO TELL YOU
BUT I THINK YOU SHOULD KNOW
WE'VE DEPENDED ON HIM TOO MUCH

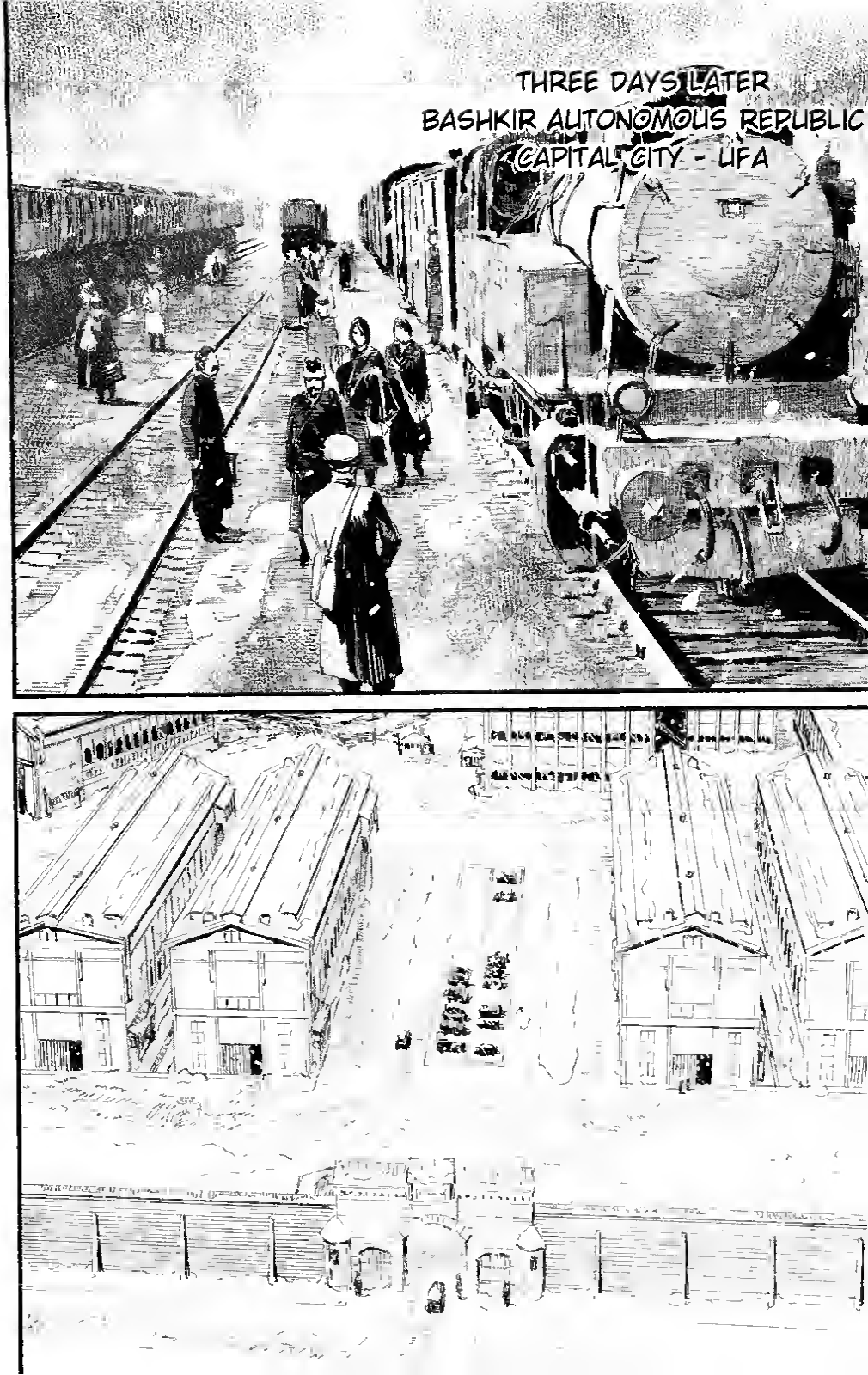

VIKTOR
IS PROBABLY GOING TO BE TAKEN AWAY BY THE NKVD IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS
YESTERDAY HIS COLLEAGUE
WAS RESTRAINED BY THE SAME OGPU AND IMPRISONED IN LUBYANKA
HIS CHARGE WAS "BEING A COMMISSIONED OFFICER OF THE FORMER IMPERIAL ARMY"
RECENTLY... IT SEEMS LIKE THEY'VE BEEN EXCESSIVE, SINCE THE OGPU WAS ABSORBED INTO THE NKVD
THEY'RE THROWING THE CENTRAL FIGURES OF THE COUNTRY INTO PRISON ONE AFTER ANOTHER
AND VIKTOR WAS AN OFFICER FOR THE FORMER IMPERIAL ARMY TOO
HE MAY MEET THE SAME FATE AS HIS COLLEAGUE
IF YOU'RE HERE WHEN THEY COME THEY'LL TAKE...

*BANG!

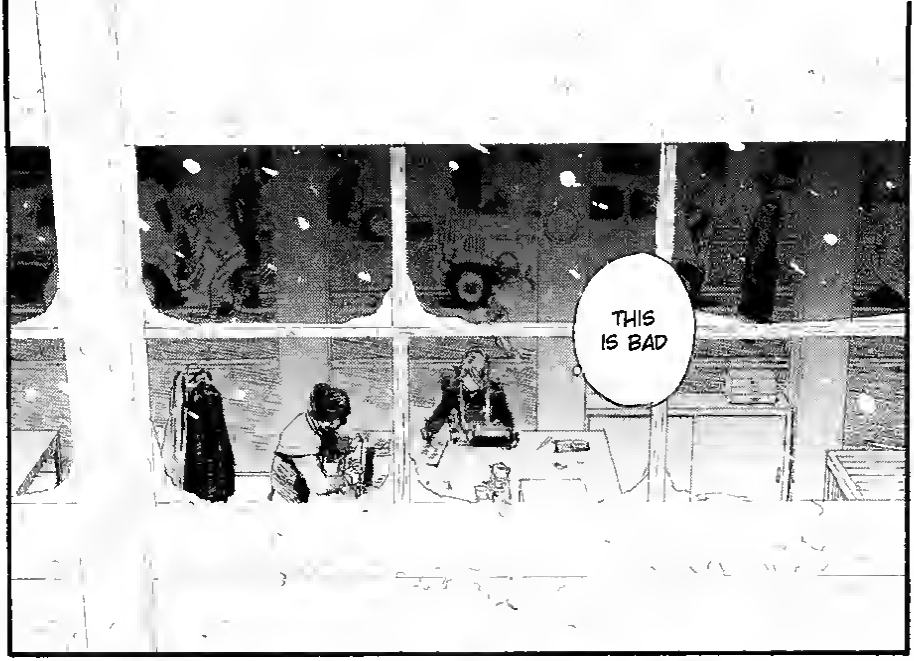
AND WHICH OF THE WOMEN IS BELKA SNEGURKA!?
SHCHENOK MIZGIRYOV...
COME OUTSIDE
SO I SHOULD HAVE DRIVEN YOU OUT YESTERDAY ...
HEHE...

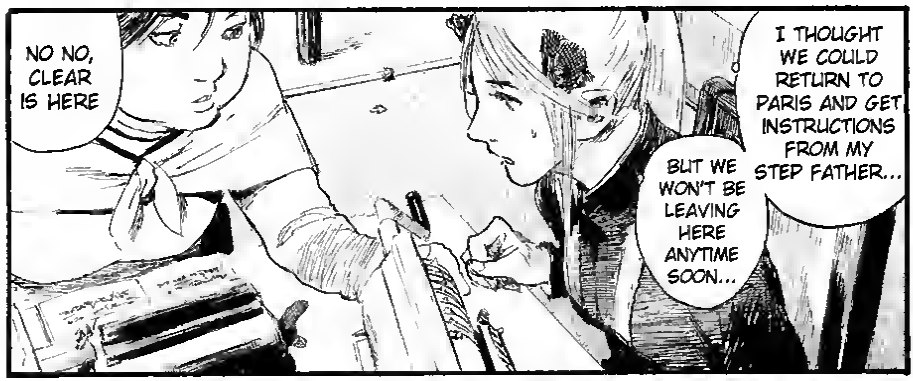
YOU TWO ARE HEADED TO UFA
HE'S BEING TAKEN TO MOSCOW
ISN'T MIKHALKOV COMING WITH US...?
... EXCUSE ME

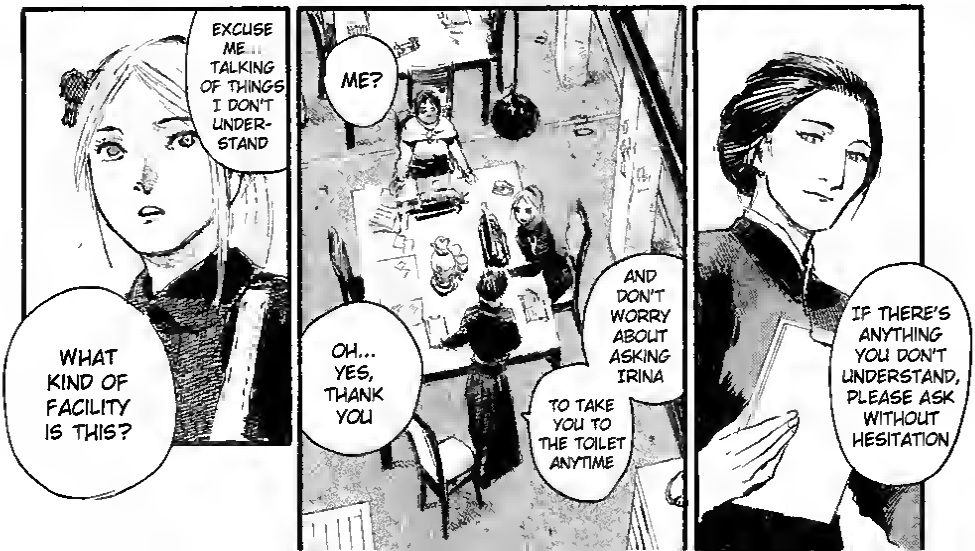

UFA...?


THREE DAYS LATER
BASHKIR AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC
CAPITAL CITY - UFA

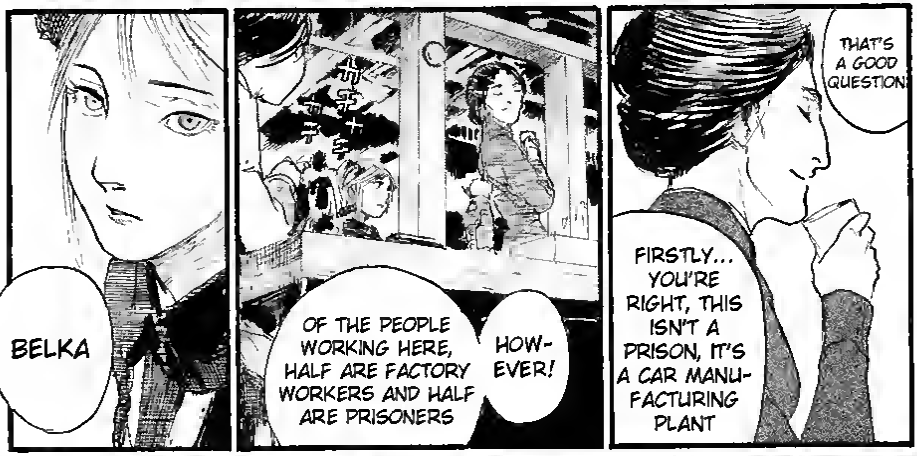
EXCUSE ME, WE HAVE TO GO TOGETHER ...
DON'T BE STUPID, COME ON! GIVE HER HERE
EH?
HEY! YOU
YOU'RE AT THIS FACTORY
She's so light
...OBEY THEM, WE DON'T WANT TO CREATE A SCENE HERE...
TELL THIS WOMAN WHAT SHE'LL BE DOING!
MARIA! IRINA!


THIS IS BAD


NO NO, CLEAR IS HERE
I THOUGHT WE COULD RETURN TO PARIS AND GET INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY STEP FATHER...
BUT WE WON'T BE LEAVING HERE ANYTIME SOON...


EXCUSE ME... TALKING OF THINGS I DON'T UNDER-STAND
WHAT KIND OF FACILITY IS THIS?
ME?
OH... YES, THANK YOU
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT ASKING IRINA
TO TAKE YOU TO THE TOILET ANYTIME
IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, PLEASE ASK WITHOUT HESITATION

WHAT IS THIS PLACE...? PRISONS DON'T HAVE FENCES THAT FLIMSY
I WAS SURE WE'D BE TAKEN TO A PRISON ...
WHAT I'M DOING NOW IS "LABOUR", CORRECT?


BELKA
OF THE PEOPLE WORKING HERE, HALF ARE FACTORY WORKERS AND HALF ARE PRISONERS
HOW-EVER!
THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION
FIRSTLY... YOU'RE RIGHT, THIS ISN'T A PRISON, IT'S A CAR MANU-FACTURING PLANT

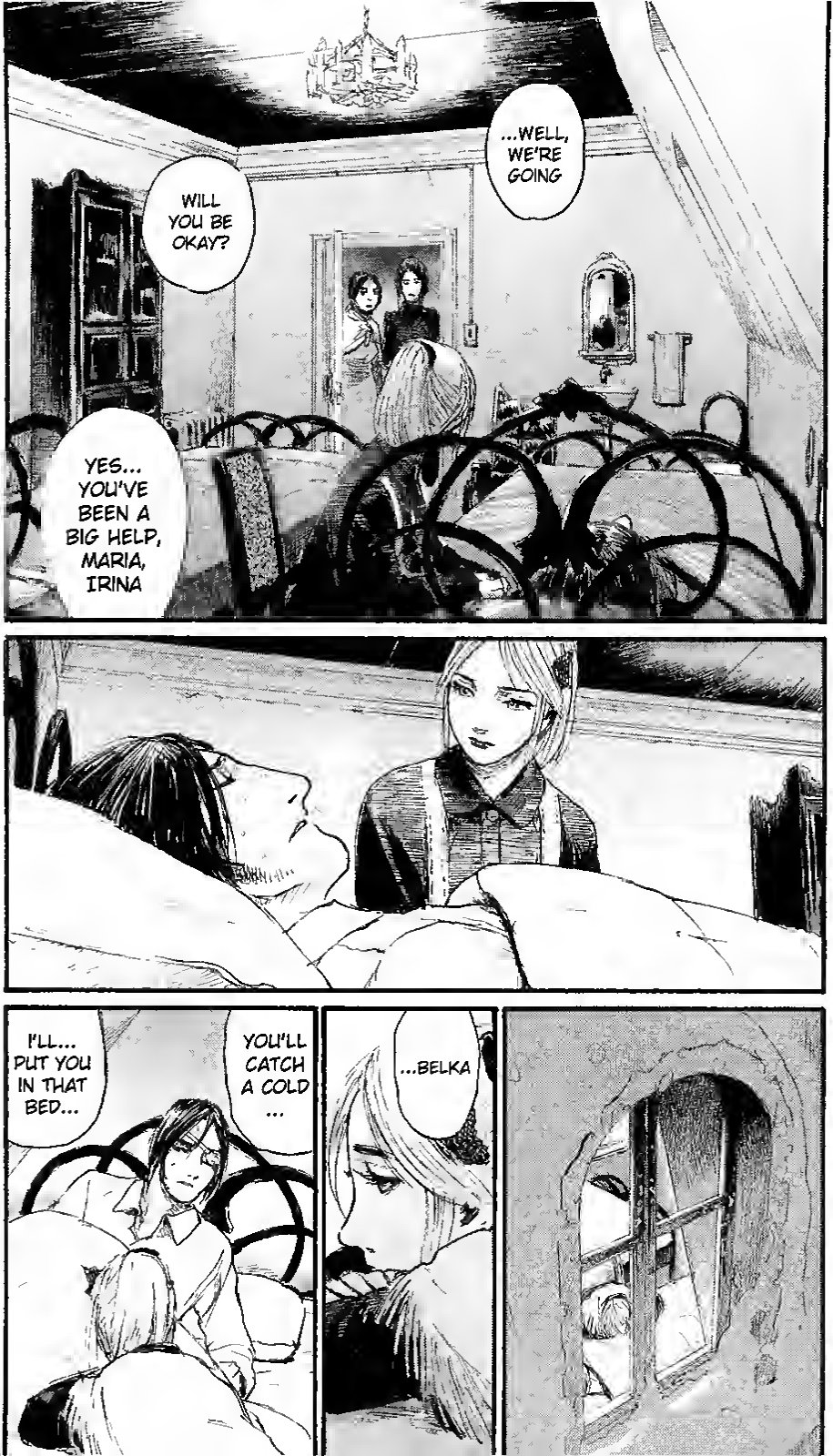
IT'S
FARMERS DIED LEFT AND RIGHT DURING LAST YEAR'S FAMINE, AND THE FOOD RATIONS FOR THE FACTORY WORKERS WERE DELAYED... BUT THE PLAN IS GOING WELL
"GOING WELL"
УСИЛИЯМИ МИЛЛИОНОВ РАБОЧИХ ВОВЛЕЧЕНИЯ В СОЦИАЛИ-СТИЧЕСКОЕ СОРЕВНОВАНИЕ
YOU KNOW ABOUT THE "FIVE YEAR PLANS", RIGHT?
NOW WE'RE IN THE "SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN"... A MAD PLAN TO SHUT DOWN THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP INDUSTRY
ПЯТИЛЕТКУ ПРЕВРАТИМ В ЧЕТЫРЕХЛЕТКУ

BUT WE REALLY HAVE NO WORK TO DO DURING WINTER... SO WE WERE RECRUITED HERE
IRINA AND I ARE GENERALLY PUT TO WORK ON THE AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS
TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THAT IDEAL AND REALITY
WE PRISONERS WORK DILIGENTLY FOR FREE
OH...

IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE NOT LETTING THE PRISONERS OFF SO EASILY THOUGH
BUT OF COURSE THE LABOURERS ARE DISCHARGED FROM DUTY WHEN IT'S SNOWING LIKE THIS
OR IT'S GOING TO BE
MARIA
WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE!?
OH... IT'S AN OIL REFINERY...
TAKE ME THERE!! ...QUICKLY

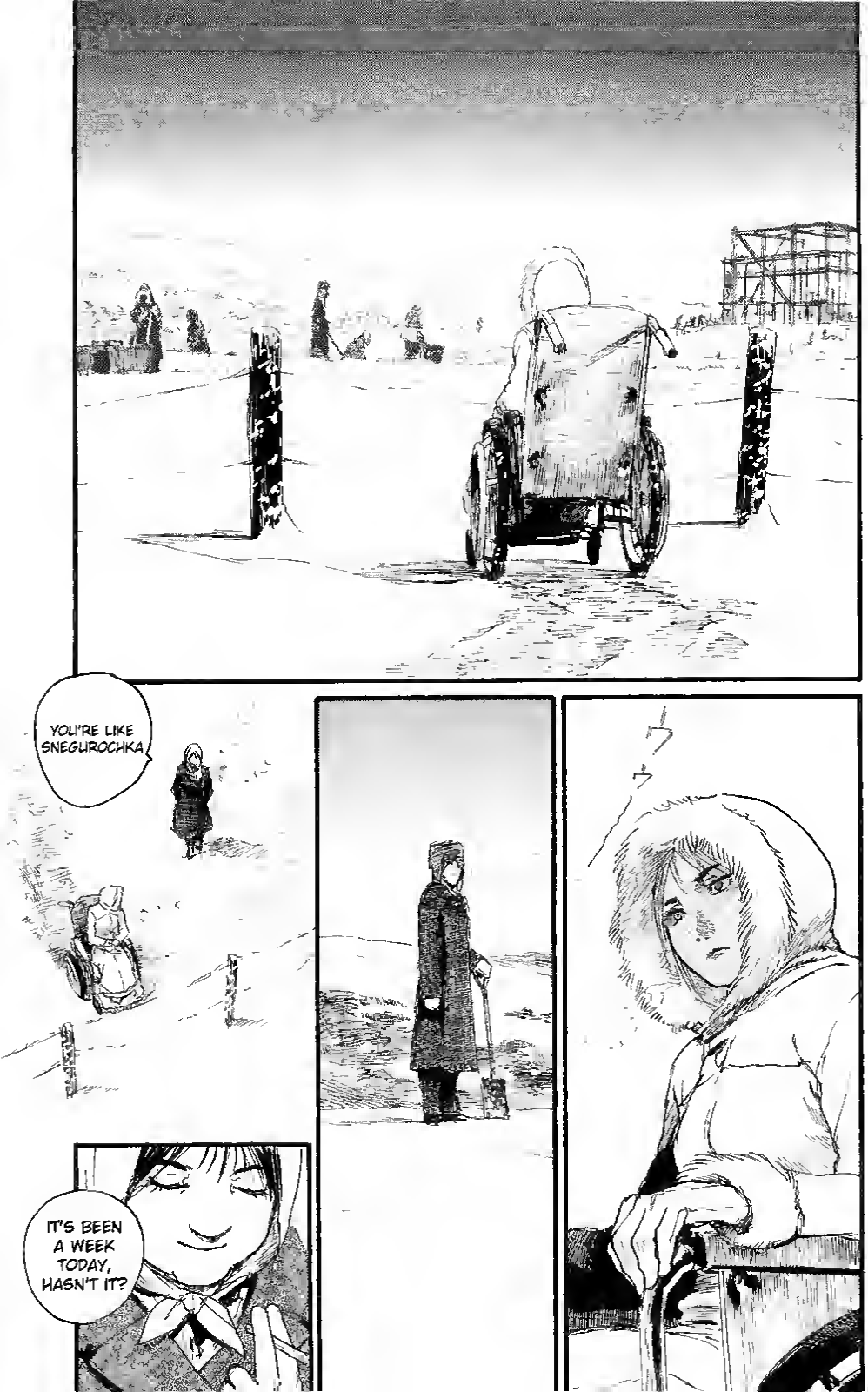
HAH
HAH
HAH
...HE'S BLEEDING UNDER THE GLOVE... THIS IS BAD

GIVE ME YOUR HAND, SHCHENOK
HEY!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? DON'T MOVE!

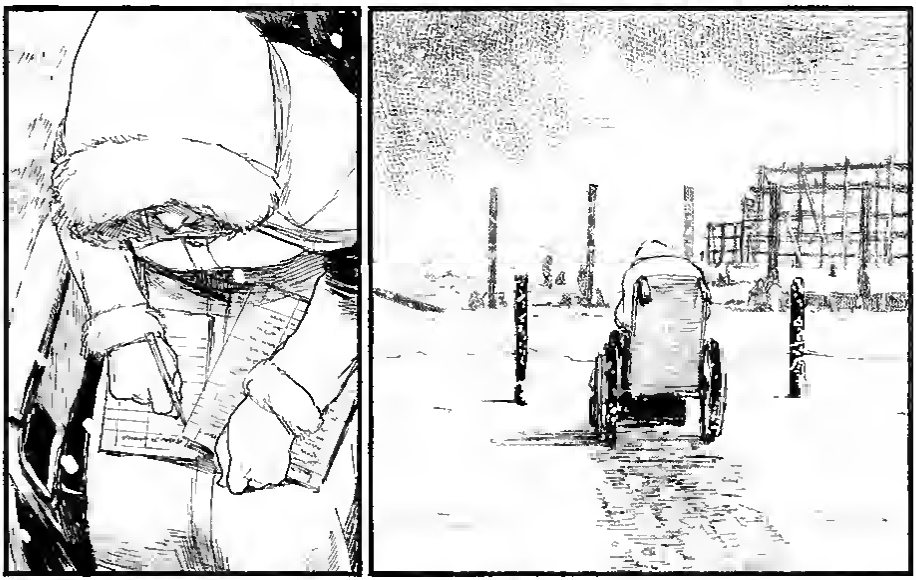

...WELL, WE'RE GOING
WILL YOU BE OKAY?
YES... YOU'VE BEEN A BIG HELP, MARIA, IRINA
I'LL... PUT YOU IN THAT BED...
YOU'LL CATCH A COLD ...
...BELKA

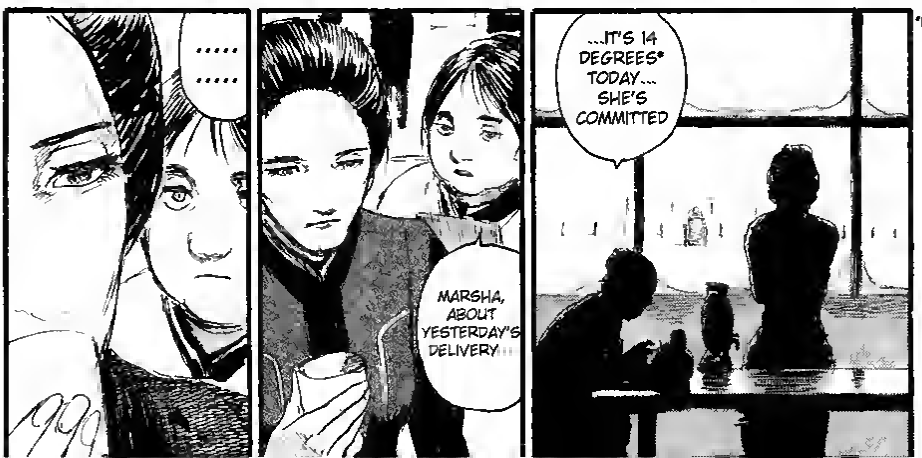
RUSTLE!
!?
WE'RE SIBLINGS, SO THIS IS FINE, RIGHT?
DID YOU EVER SLEEP TOGETHER WITH YOUR REAL SISTERS?
...YES
OLISHKA WOULD OFTEN LET ME SLEEP IN HER BED

YOU LOOK JUST LIKE HER
WHERE'S BELKA? OUTSIDE AGAIN?
"ABOLISHMENT OF RATION STAMPS TO BETTER THE PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOODS" !?
THOSE BOLSHEVIKS ARE GOOD AT SPINNING BAD NEWS...!


YOU'RE LIKE SNEGUROCHKA
IT'S BEEN A WEEK TODAY, HASN'T IT?

MARIA MENTIONED IT YESTERDAY
...I'M SORRY
IF YOU DON'T EAT TOO YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO CLEAN UP
SQUEAK
THEY'RE FINISHING UP FOR THE DAY OVER THERE TOO
DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS, THEY MIGHT MOVE HIM TO ANOTHER WORKPLACE
BUT WHY DON'T YOU HAVE SHCHENOK LOOKED OVER BY THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT?
IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO LATE THOUGH...
HE SHOULD HAVE ACTUALLY HAD AN APTITUDE TEST THE DAY HE ARRIVED... BUT I SUPPOSE THEY WERE SHORT-STAFFED OVER THERE AS WELL
IT'S AN ILLNESS THAT'S BETTER KEPT SECRET..
BUT
THANK YOU, IRINA...



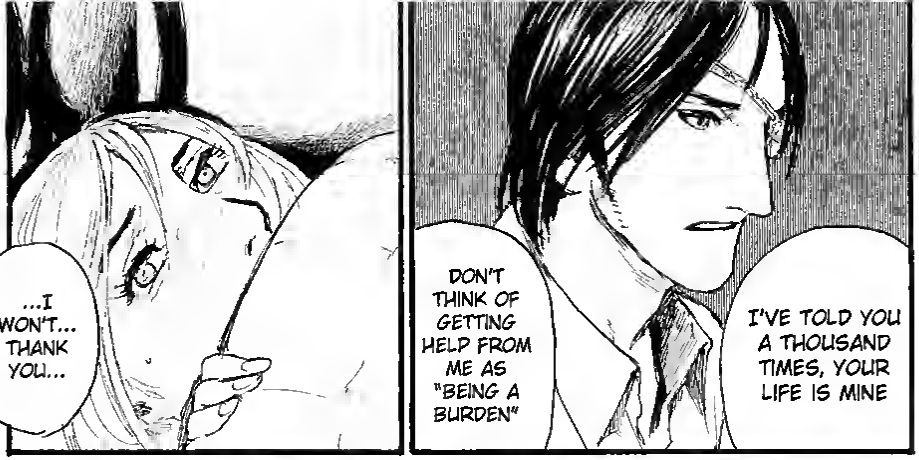


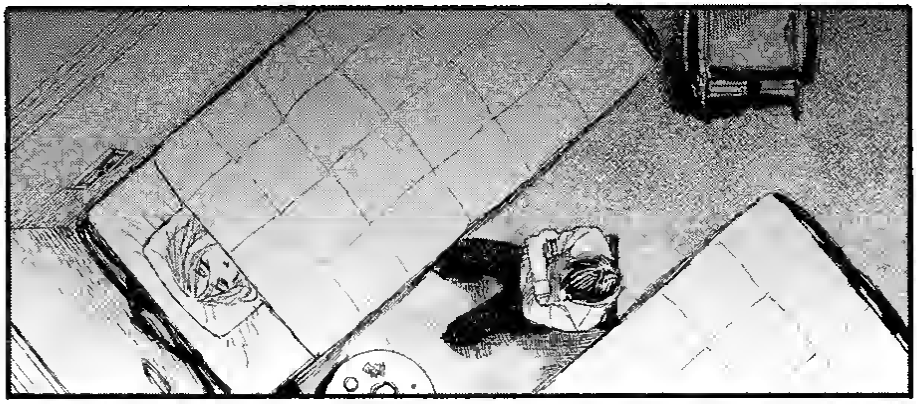
*FAHRENHEIT MINUS 10 DEGREES CELCIUS

...?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING...?
TO CALL FOR SOMEONE FROM THE MEDICAL DEPART-MENT
COUGH COUGH
COUGH
COUGH.
DON'T!!
IF THEY SEE ME LIKE THIS THEY WON'T LET ME WORK OUTSIDE ANYMORE...
I CAN'T WORK ALL DAY IN A PLACE I CAN'T SEE YOU!
THUD
COUGH
IF YOU GO I WON'T SPEAK TO YOU...
COUGH ...

...? HEY
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? STOP!
COUGH ...
COUGH COUGH
I'M FINE! JUST LET ME B...
THEY'RE ALL FOR YOU!
THE LEFT LEG HAS ANTI-HEMORRHAGICS, THE RIGHT HAS EVERYTHING ELSE... RIGHT?
WE DON'T KNOW WHEN WE'LL NEXT BE IN CONTACT WITH DR. BADMAEV
!

Turn
МИХАЛКОВ
"MIKHALKOV"
.....
.....
.....
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
BELKA
THEN LIE DOWN
...I'VE TAKEN IT


...I WON'T... THANK YOU...
DON'T THINK OF GETTING HELP FROM ME AS "BEING A BURDEN"
I'VE TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES, YOUR LIFE IS MINE



WHAT!?
NO... I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT

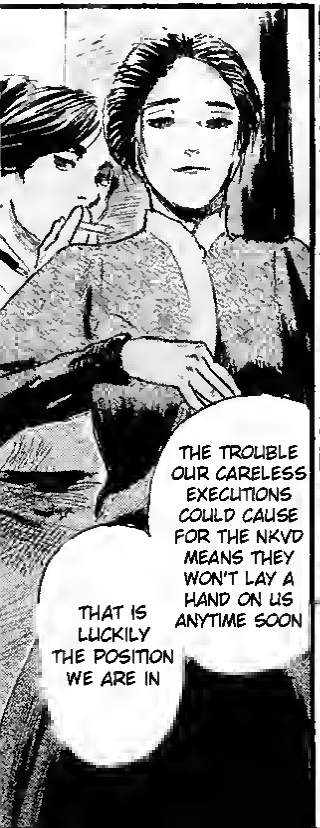
KNOCK KNOCK

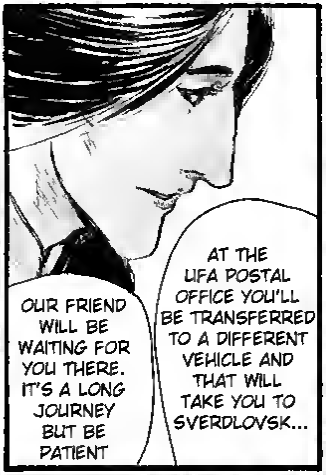
BUT... YOU SHOULD SAVE YOURSELVES FIRST...
WHEN WE BECOME UNABLE TO WORK IT'S VERY LIKELY THAT THEY'LL FABRICATE A CRIME AND SHOOT US
WHAT THE BOLSHEVIKS WANT ARE DISPLAYS OF FEAR TO OPPRESS THE PEOPLE AND FREE LABOUR
NO MATTER HOW LONG WE DO IT, WON'T RESULT IN OUR RELEASE
BUT OUR WORK HERE
...YOU PROBABLY DON'T UNDERSTAND FULLY YET

WE'RE PREPARED TO BE KILLED, BUT YOU TWO AREN'T, ARE YOU?
WE DABBLED IN TERRORISM WHEN WE WERE YOUNGER TOO
WE'VE BEEN DENOUNCING THE BOLSHEVIKS QUITE SERVERLY IN ORDER TO HELP THE FARMERS FOR A LONG TIME

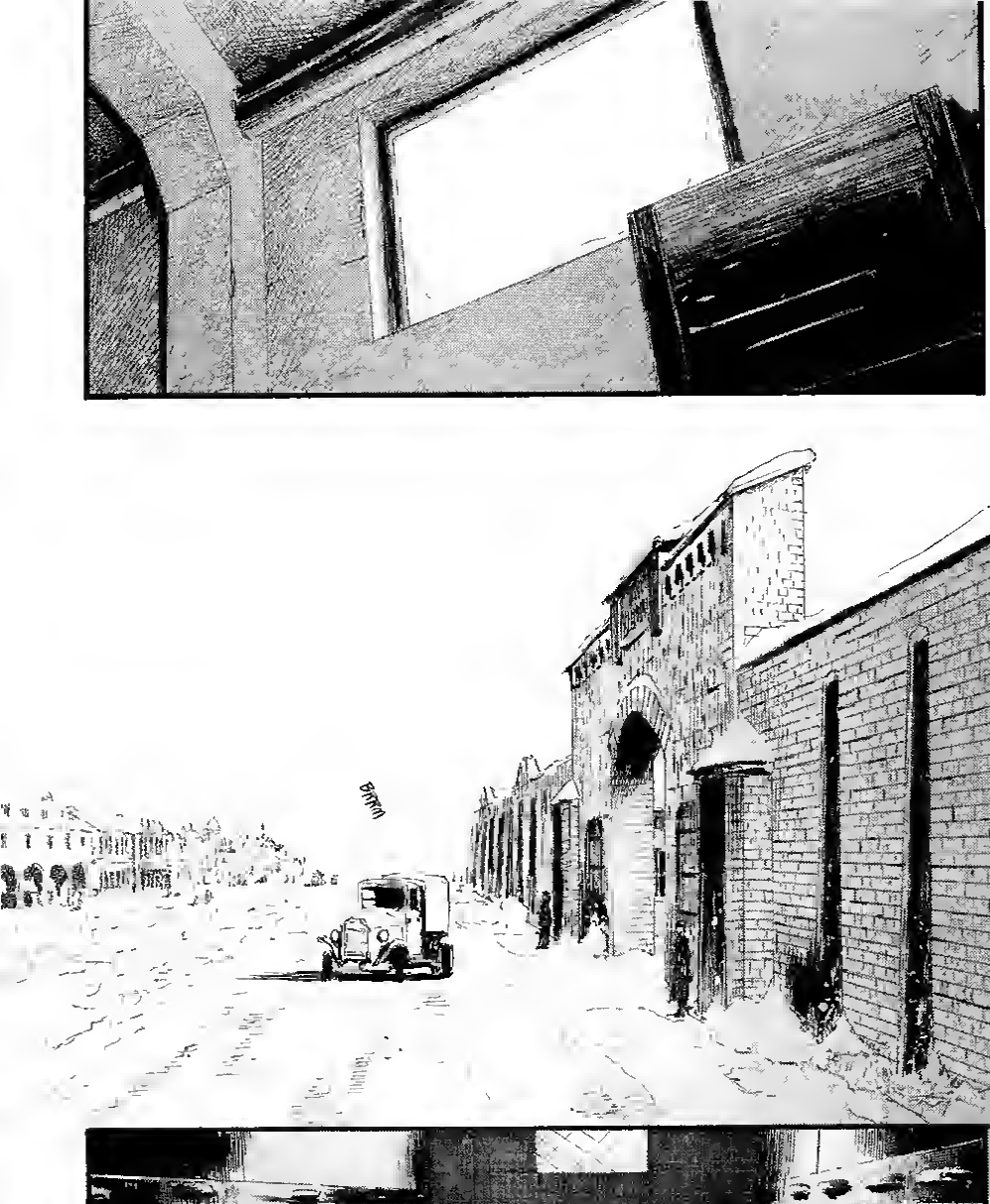
WE HAVE MANY CONNECTIONS TO HELP WITH ESCAPE
DON'T WORRY

почта:
POST OFFICE



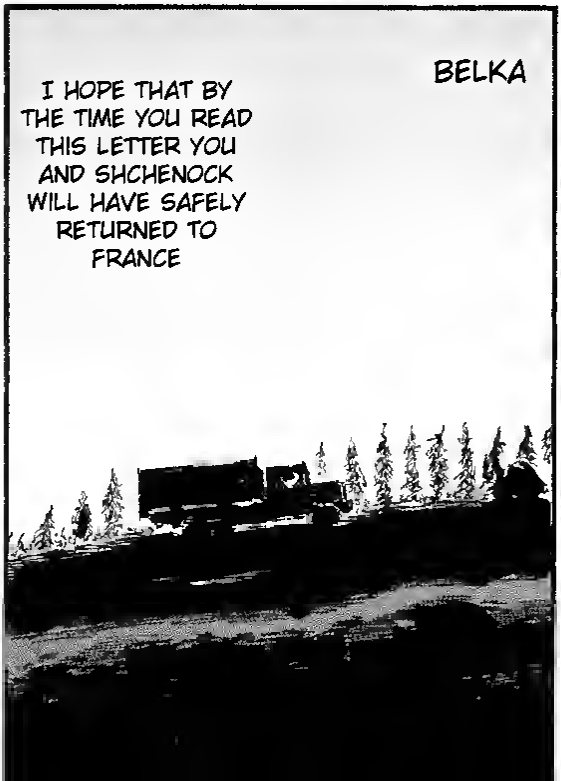


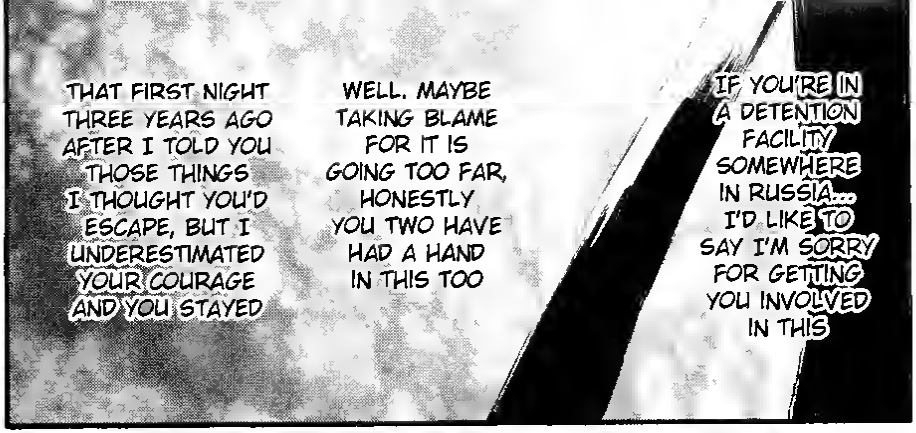
...SEE? YOU'RE FAMOUS
—MARIA SPIRIDONOVA—
(CHARISMATIC LEFT SR ACTIVIST AND TERRORIST)
I'M VERY GRATEFUL... MARIA SPIRIDONOVA
I SEE...
I THOUGHT I'D SEEN YOUR FACE IN THE NEWSPAPER
I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU
MARIA... IRINA...
THOSE
ARE THE ACTUAL NAMES OF MY SISTER AND MOTHER...



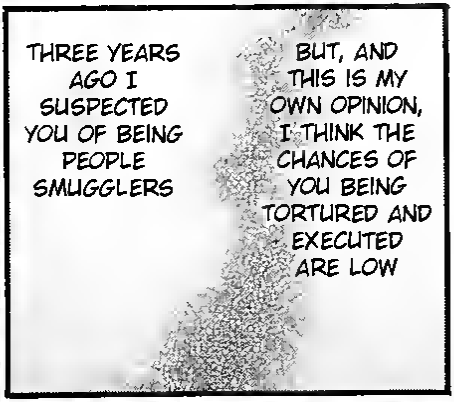
... SVERDLOVSK ...
"OUR FRIEND WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU THERE"
"THAT WILL TAKE YOU TO SVERDLO-VSK"

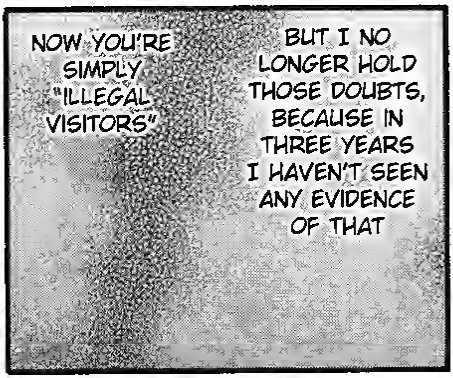
VRRRRR

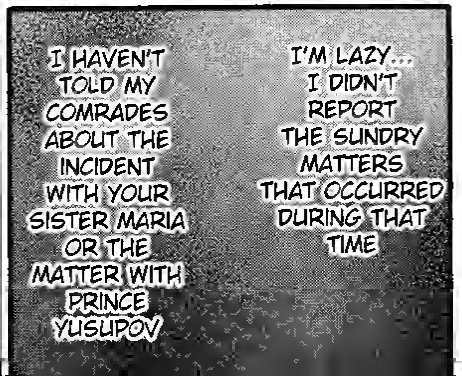

BELKA
I HOPE THAT BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS LETTER YOU AND SHCHENOCK WILL HAVE SAFELY RETURNED TO FRANCE


IF YOU'RE IN A DETENTION FACILITY SOMEWHERE IN RUSSIA... I'D LIKE TO SAY I'M SORRY FOR GETTING YOU INVOLVED IN THIS
WELL. MAYBE TAKING BLAME FOR IT IS GOING TOO FAR, HONESTLY YOU TWO HAVE HAD A HAND IN THIS TOO
THAT FIRST NIGHT THREE YEARS AGO AFTER I TOLD YOU THOSE THINGS I THOUGHT YOU'D ESCAPE, BUT I UNDERESTIMATED YOUR COURAGE AND YOU STAYED

AND I WON'T TELL ANYONE AS LONG AS I LIVE
THERE'S NO REASON FOR ME TO


THREE YEARS AGO I SUSPECTED YOU OF BEING PEOPLE SMUGGLERS
BUT, AND THIS IS MY OWN OPINION, I THINK THE CHANCES OF YOU BEING TORTURED AND EXECUTED ARE LOW


NOW YOU'RE SIMPLY "ILLEGAL VISITORS"
BUT I NO LONGER HOLD THOSE DOUBTS, BECAUSE IN THREE YEARS I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY EVIDENCE OF THAT


I HAVEN'T TOLD MY COMRADES ABOUT THE INCIDENT WITH YOUR SISTER MARIA OR THE MATTER WITH PRINCE YUSUPOV
I'M LAZY... I DIDN'T REPORT THE SUNDRY MATTERS THAT OCCURRED DURING THAT TIME

FELIX YUSUPOV IS THE HEIR TO TSARIST RUSSIA'S GREATEST NOBLE FAMILY, THE YUSUPOVS
ONE DAY I SAW PRINCE YUSUPOV AND SHCHENOK'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER
I KNEW ...THIS CHARACTER KNOWN AS "SHCHENOK" WAS SOMEONE IMPORTANT
THERE ARE ONLY TWO MEN IN THIS COUNTRY WHO HE WOULD KNEEL AND BOW TO
WHICH MEANT, BELKA... THAT I HAD A ROUGH IDEA OF WHO YOU ARE
RUSSIA'S LAST TSAR, NIKOLAI ALEXANDROVICH ROMANOV
OR

TSESAREVICH
ALEXEI
NIKOLAEVICH
ROMANOV

CHAPTER 6

1918

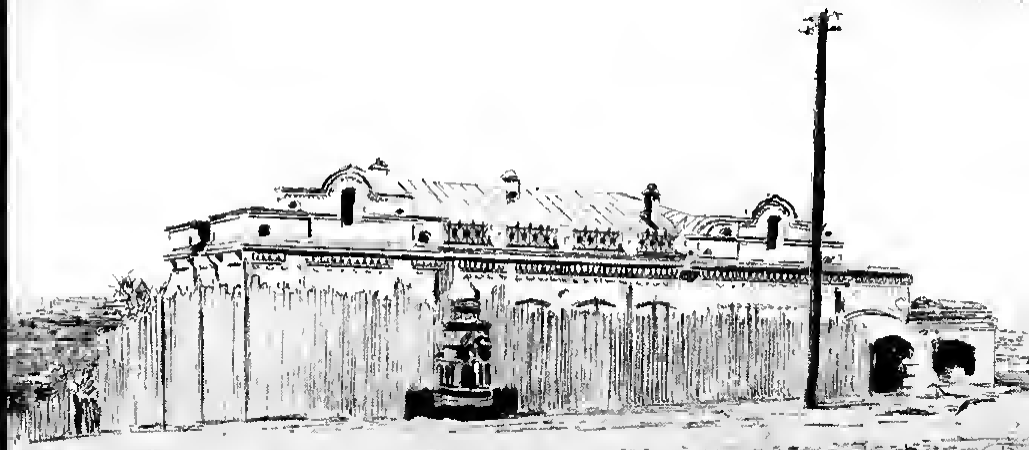
AH!
OH
OK!!
RUFF! RUFF!
GO TELL DR. BOTKIN TATYA!
HE'S AWAKE
SNIFF...
SNIFF...!
NOW STOP THAT! RADOST
OLISHKA! I HEARD ALYOSHA WAS AWAKE!?
I WONDER HOW YOUR FEVER IS...

GOOD... I'M NOT IN PAIN ANYMORE
OH... HOW ARE YOU FEELING? ALYOSHA
ALYOSHA, OVER HERE!
SHOW ME WHERE YOU WERE BLEEDING
OUT OF THE WAY, RADOST!
FLASH
DON'T TAKE A PHOTO !!
HEY... STOP IT! NASTYA
YOU WANT TO WEAR THEM TOO, DON'T YOU!
THEY SUIT YOU
MASHKA MADE THESE FOR ME! WHAT DO YOU THINK!?
LEAVE YOUR BROTHER ALONE, NASTYA!

"IPATIEV HOUSE", A MANSION CONFISCATED FROM THE WEALTHY IPATIEV BY THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT DURING THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.
THE FOLLOWING 11 PEOPLE ARE RECORDED TO HAVE BEEN EXECUTED IN THAT HOUSE IN THE EARLY MORNING BETWEEN THE 16TH AND 17TH OF JULY, 1918.

TSAR NIKOLAI ROMANOV II
TSARINA ALEXANDRA ROMANOVA
GRAND DUCHESS OLGA (ORISHKA) ROMANOVA
TATIANA (TATYA) ROMANOVA
MARIA (MASHKA) ROMANOVA
ANASTASIA (NASTYA) ROMANOVA
TSAREVICH ALEXEI (ALYOSHA) ROMANOV

COURT PHYSICIAN YEVGENY BOTKIN
COOK IVAN KHARITONOV
MAID ANNA DEMIDOVA
FOOTMAN ALEXEI TRUPP



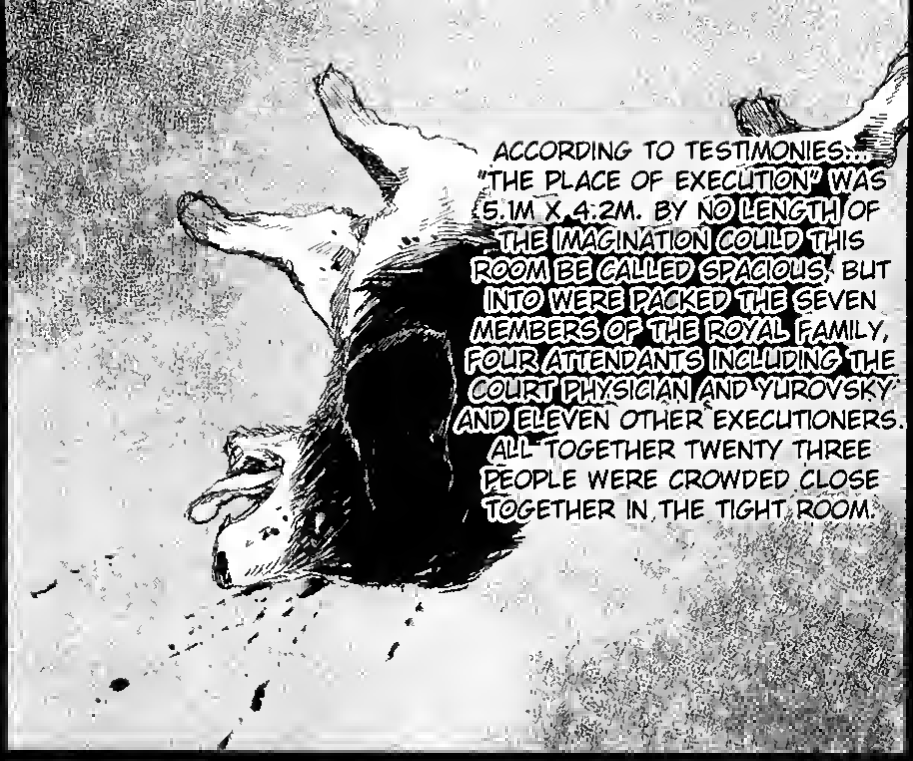
I'M JUST PRACTISING WALKING
GEEZ! PAPA SPOILS YOU
DON'T FALL OVER, ALYOSHA
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL... PUPPY SHCHENOK
ARE YOU COMING TOO, RADOST?
SNIFF
SNIFF
SHALL I TAKE IT? SHALL I?
HEY...
Ruff
Ruff
Ruff
OH? WHAT'S THIS YOU'VE GOT IN YOUR HAIR?
ARE THOSE SAPPHIRES OR SOMETHING? AREN'T YOU EMBARRASSED HAVING THESE ON YOUR HEAD?

NAGO-
RNY!
AH!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!
...YOU CAN ONLY BAIL WATER OUT OF A SINKING SHIP FOR SO LONG
SMACK
YOU SHOULD GIVE ME PIGGYBACK RIDES SOME-TIMES TOO, NAGORNY!
LET ME PUT YOU UP ON MY SHOULDER, YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS

EXCUSE ME...
OH, YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT NAGORNY, DO YOU? SHCHENOK
WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN SEVERAL DAYS...
WHAT'S NAGORNY DOING?
EVERY ONE OF YOUR ALLIES IN THIS COUNTRY ARE BEING KILLED, ISN'T THAT SAD~?
HE'S BEEN SHOT

Oof!
"WHAT THE HELL"?
THAT HURT... WHAT THE HELL...
I'M YOUR NEW BOSS
...ACTUALLY, THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT. I HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE MY OWN SUBORDINATES

ADJUTANT NIKULIN AND I WILL BE TAKING CONTROL OVER YOUR ESCORT STARTING TODAY
ABDYEV HAS BEEN DISMISSED AS THE ESCORT'S COMMANDING OFFICER, AND HIS ADJUTANT MOSHKIN HAS BEEN ARRESTED
DELEGATE FROM THE URAL SOVIETS, YAKOV YUROVSKY?
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LAST ONE... ABDYEV?
WE'RE CHANGING OVER ALL YOUR BODYGUARDS SO SUCH A THING WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN
IT SEEMS OUR PREDECESSORS DID WHATEVER THEY PLEASED
I JUST WANT MY WIFE AND CHILDREN TO BE SAFE...
I... I'M SO GLAD TO HEAR THAT
AS THE "MAN WHO EXECUTED THE LAST TSAR OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA"
YAKOV MIKHAILOVICH YUROVSKY... THAT NAME WOULD GO DOWN IN THE HISTORY OF RUSSIA
I SYMPATHISE WITH YOUR WORRIES, TSAR


ACCORDING TO TESTIMONIES... "THE PLACE OF EXECUTION" WAS 5.1M X 4.2M. BY NO LENGTH OF THE IMAGINATION COULD THIS ROOM BE CALLED SPACIOUS, BUT INTO WERE PACKED THE SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, FOUR ATTENDANTS INCLUDING THE COURT PHYSICIAN AND YUROVSKY AND ELEVEN OTHER EXECUTIONERS. ALL TOGETHER TWENTY THREE PEOPLE WERE CROWDED CLOSE TOGETHER IN THE TIGHT ROOM.

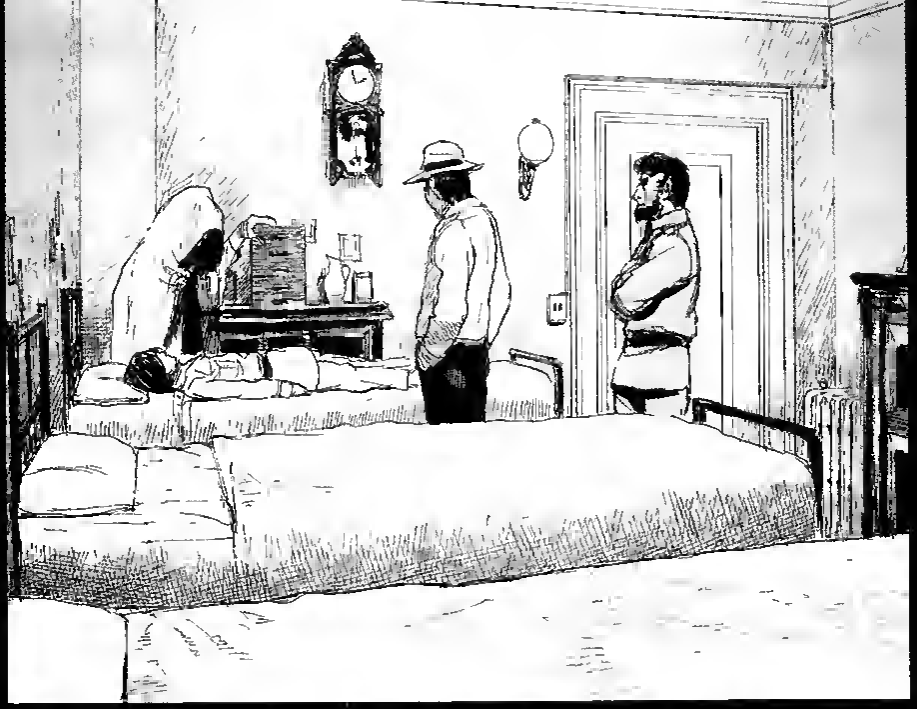
YOU WERE OUR ALLY...
I THOUGHT ...
... YUROVSKY
KING GEORGE V OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ...WILHELM II, GERMAN EMPEROR
WE'D BE DOING THE SAME EVEN IF WE WERE YOUR ALLIES
...BUT
WE'RE NOT DOING THIS BECAUSE WE DESPISE YOU ALL
I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY EITHER, TSAR
TO TRY TO GET YOU OUT OF THE COUNTRY
BUT IN THE END NOT ONE OF THEM CURRENTLY VALUES YOU ENOUGH
YOU HAVE A LOT OF "ALLIES"

YUROVSKY
...

BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG!
BANG!

...CAN WE COME IN? YUROVSKY
DOCTOR BADMAYEV
...COMRADE YAKOVLEV

I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT
HE COULD BE BLEEDING INTERN-ALLY...
BUT I SAW HIM HIT HIS KNEE WHEN HE FELL
WE DIDN'T HIT HIM
COM-PLETELY DEAD
WHAT ABOUT THE TSAR AND TSARINA?
HE'S JUST FAINTED... THE BLOOD ON HIS CLOTHES IS HIS FATHER'S
IF ANY OF THEM ARE STILL BREATHING PUT THEM OUT OF THEIR MISERY
WELL... THOSE FOUR DON'T MATTER
WE'RE CHECKING WHETHER THE GRAND DUCHESSES ARE DEAD OR ALIVE NOW
TAKE ALEXEI TO THE BEDROOM
YAKOVLEV



THIS IS "HAEMOPHILIA" ...
IT'S BLED SO MUCH...

WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S BEEN BOILED WITH OAK BARK ...IT STOPS BLEEDING
IT'S A DISORDER THAT ONLY APPEARS IN BOYS...
IT'S CURSED BLOOD CARRIED FROM THE ENGLISH ROYAL FAMILY BY TSARINA ALEXANDRA

DOCTORS THROUGHOUT RUSSIA WERE PERPLEXED BY THIS ILLNESS AND SCOFFED AT USING THE PRIMITIVE ORIENTAL HERBAL METHODS THAT STARTED IN TIBETAN MEDICINE
BUT THERE WAS A MAN WHO TAUGHT ME ABOUT THE SECRET HERBAL ARTS LONG AGO
AND HE TRIED TO USE THAT KNOWLEDGE AS A WEAPON TO WIN OVER GREAT RUSSIA
.....
.....
.....
GRIGORI RASPUTIN...
I COULDN'T DO WHAT HE DID
HE REALLY DID HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL THAT I DIDN'T
...EVEN IF I HAD SOME SUPERIORITY TO HIM IN THE MEDICINAL ARTS
THOSE EYES...! HE HAD A GAZE THAT SEEMED TO PIERCE RIGHT THROUGH YOUR SKULL
IN NO TIME AT ALL HE'D PULL YOU INTO AN INTOXICATED STATE
AND FINALLY THOSE EYES WOULD BRING YOU TO A TRANQUILITY LIKE THE SEDIMENT IN THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN

THERE ARE MANY CLINICAL CASES WHERE DEEP MENTAL STABILITY HAS STOPPED HAE-MORRHAGING
BUT... RASPUTIN IS DEAD
AND THE CHEKA WILL GET YOU TOO SOON...
OUR PLAN IF FOR THE TSAREVICH TO REMAIN HERE UNTIL THE WHITE ARMY TAKES OVER PROTECTION OF HIM
YOU CAN GO TOO OF COURSE ...
THE BOLSHE-VIKS
HAVE KILLED GRIGORI AND NOW KNOW THAT I'M THE DOCTOR WHO BEST UNDERSTANDS ALEXEI'S ILLNESS ...MORE THAN OTHER DOCTOR IN RUSSIA
IF I OF ALL PEOPLE WAS TO DISAPPEAR TODAY, IT WOULD CAST DOUBT ON THE "TSAREVICH'S DEATH"
BUT... THEN...
I'VE MADE SOMEONE TO TAKE MY PLACE
SHE
HAS GRIGORI'S EYES

SHE CAN'T LEAVE ALEXEI OF HER OWN FREE WILL
THE FACE OF A ROYAL GIRL
AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE SECRET HIMALAYIAN HERBAL ARTS
ALEXEI WILL NEVER FIND A GREATER RELIEF
THE BODY WE GOT TO REPLACE THE TSAREVICH'S ...
WHAT IS IT?
CAPTAIN!! WE HAVE A PROBLEM
....? YOU SAID "MADE"? WHAT DO YOU MEAN...
THEY'RE BLUE SINIY...
UM... WEREN'T THE TSAREVICH'S EYES...
HIS EYES ARE BROWN KORICHNEVY ...

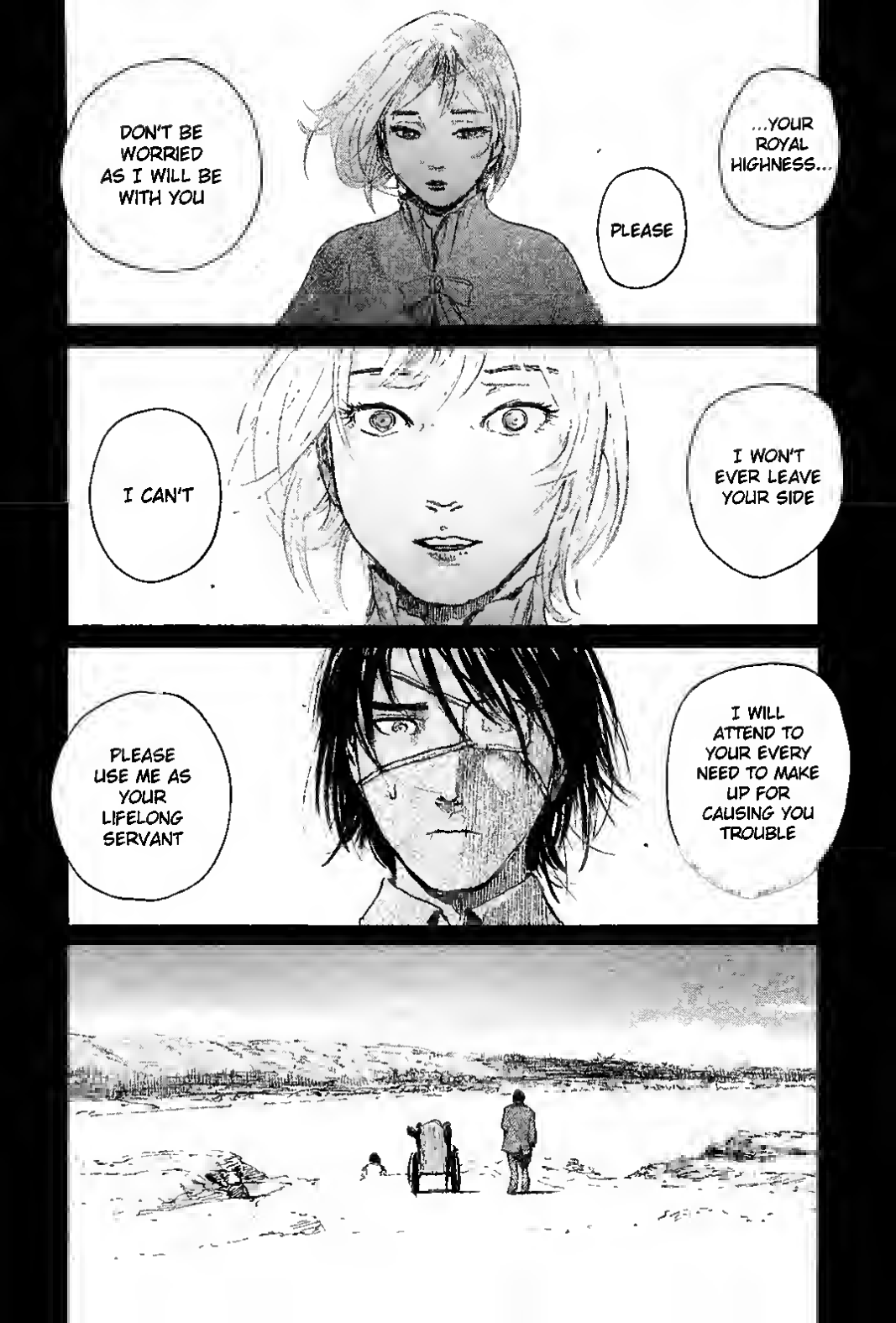
LONG AGO
DOCTOR...
...BUT
IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR ONE EYE TO BE STRUCK
SHOOT OUT BOTH HIS EYES? IT'S A PLAUSIBLE OCCURENCE...
...WHAT DO WE DO!?
ISN'T THAT HIGHLY UNLIKELY ?
IT'S EXTREMELY UNNATURAL ...
I WAS AT THE END OF MY WITS
EVEN AS MEDICAL TREATMENT, CUTTING OPEN PEOPLE'S BODIES AND SPILLING BLOOD IS DONE BY THE LOWEST CASTE
OVER THERE SURGEONS ARE NOT TREATED AS HUMAN
I WAS A MERE SURGEON. WHEN I CROSSED INTO INDIA AND TIBET TO LEARN ORIENTAL MEDICINE I HAD TROUBLE MAKING A LIVING

I LEARNT TO EXTRACT EYES WITHOUT A SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD SPILLED

THIS IS BELKA SNEGURKA

ALYOSHA ...I MEAN SHCHENOK

...THAT GLOVE!
YOU'RE BOTH USING ALIASES OF COURSE
YOU'VE NOTICED?
GRIGORI... Г.P'S GLOVE
PLEASE DON'T LET ANYONE ELSE PUSH THIS WHEELCHAIR. IT'S MADE SO THAT IT WON'T MOVE UNLESS IT'S PUSHED
APART FROM THAT, PLEASE USE HER AS YOU WOULD A SERVANT... I DON'T THINK SHE'LL BE MUCH USE EXCEPT TO TREAT YOUR ILLNESS AND KEEP YOUR BED WARM THOUGH
IT'S BEEN DIPPED INTO A BROTH MADE FROM OAK BARK AND DRIED
IT'S STILL A LITTLE TO BIG FOR HER HAND...
COME ON! SAY SOMETHING


DON'T BE WORRIED AS I WILL BE WITH YOU
PLEASE
...YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS...
I CAN'T
I WON'T EVER LEAVE YOUR SIDE
PLEASE USE ME AS YOUR LIFELONG SERVANT
I WILL ATTEND TO YOUR EVERY NEED TO MAKE UP FOR CAUSING YOU TROUBLE

WHY ME, AND NOT MY MOTHER OR FATHER...?
SO THAT I CAN GO ON LIVING
SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED ...
BUT YOU ON THE OTHER HAND...
WE CONCLUDED IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO USE THEIR NAMES AS A RALLYING CRY TO DEFEAT THE BOLSHEVIKS AND REINSTATE TSARIST RULE
THE TSAR AND TSARINA WERE TOO OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE
...NO ONE WANTS A FRAGILE TSAR

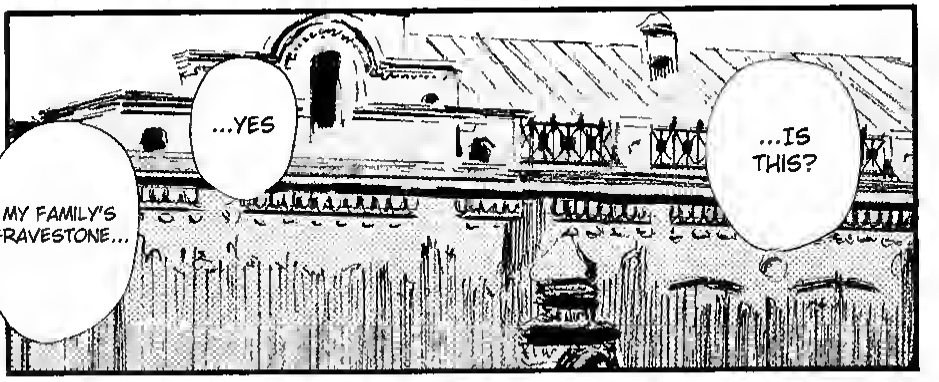
WHAT'S YOUR REAL NAME?
...NADIA
...YES
WERE YOU BORN IN THE WINTER?
BELKA SNEGUROCHKA ..."SNOW MAIDEN"...
NADIA
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO NOW?

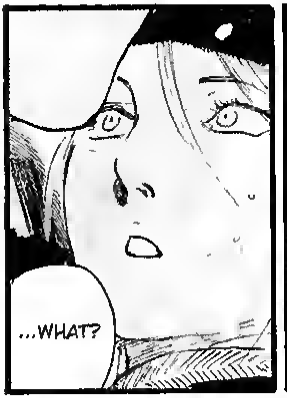
...I...
WANT TO USE... MY MOTHER'S SURNAME
...I...
I...
.....
.....
.....
...WHAT THING DO YOU MOST WANT TO DO... THINK ABOUT IT
MY FAMILY NAME... MY FATHER'S FAMILY NAME IS A CURSED ONE THAT'S DESPISED THROUGHOUT RUSSIA
BUT... MY MOTHER WAS A DISTINGUISHED NOBLE... SO...
..WHY WOULD SHE WANT A NOBLE NAME NOW?
OKAY! THEN LET'S FIND THINGS WE CAN DO SO YOU CAN USE THAT NAME
YOUR ROY... SHCHENOK!
YAKOVLEV

SO I WILL OFFER UP MY LIFE TO BE HER LEGS
THIS GIRL HAS GIVEN UP HER LEGS TO LIVE AS MY LIFEGIVER
YAKOVLEV... YOU'RE TELLING ME TO TAKE RESPONSIBILTY FOR RUSSIA
BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HER
I'LL CARRY HER TO WHEREVER SHE WANTS TO GO... NO MATTER HOW FAR
I KNOW TSARSKOYE SELO, THE WINTER PALACE, A FEW HEALTH RESORTS, THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE AT TOBOLSK AND IPATIEV HOUSE. THAT'S ALL
SO NOW
I THINK I'LL TAKE SOME TIME TO TRAVEL AROUND AND SEE THE MOTHERLAND ...WITH THIS GIRL

!
IF... YOU DON'T MIND...
EXCUSE ME... YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS...
IF...
LIKE MY SERVANT EVER AGAIN
YOU'RE NOT TO SPEAK
NADIA.. THIS IS AN ORDER
.....
.....
.....
AND PROUDLY LIKE MY REAL BIG SISTERS
SAY IT HAUGHTILY
I WANT YOU TO TELL ME WHERE YOU WANT TO GO... WHAT YOU WANT TO DO.. ANYTHING

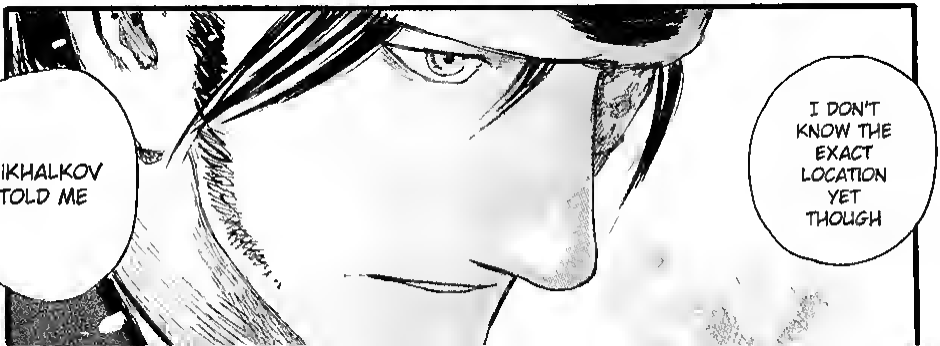
THAT WOULD MOST MAKE ME FEEL AT EASE
SVERDLOVSK OBLAST
CAPITAL SVERDLOVSK
(NOW YEKATERINBURG)


...YES
MY FAMILY'S GRAVESTONE...
...IS THIS?

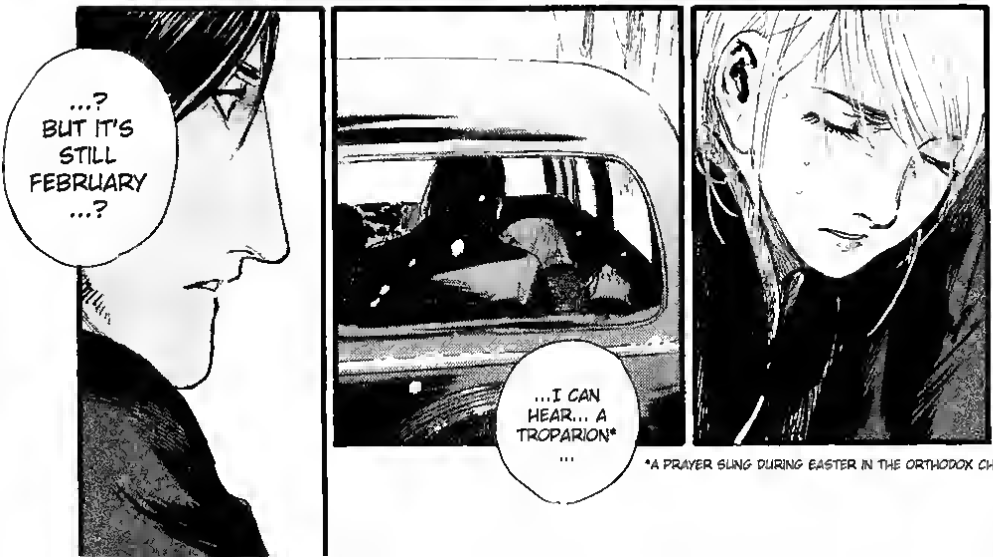

...WHAT?

I KNOW WHERE THE THING WE'RE SEARCHING FOR IS, BELKA

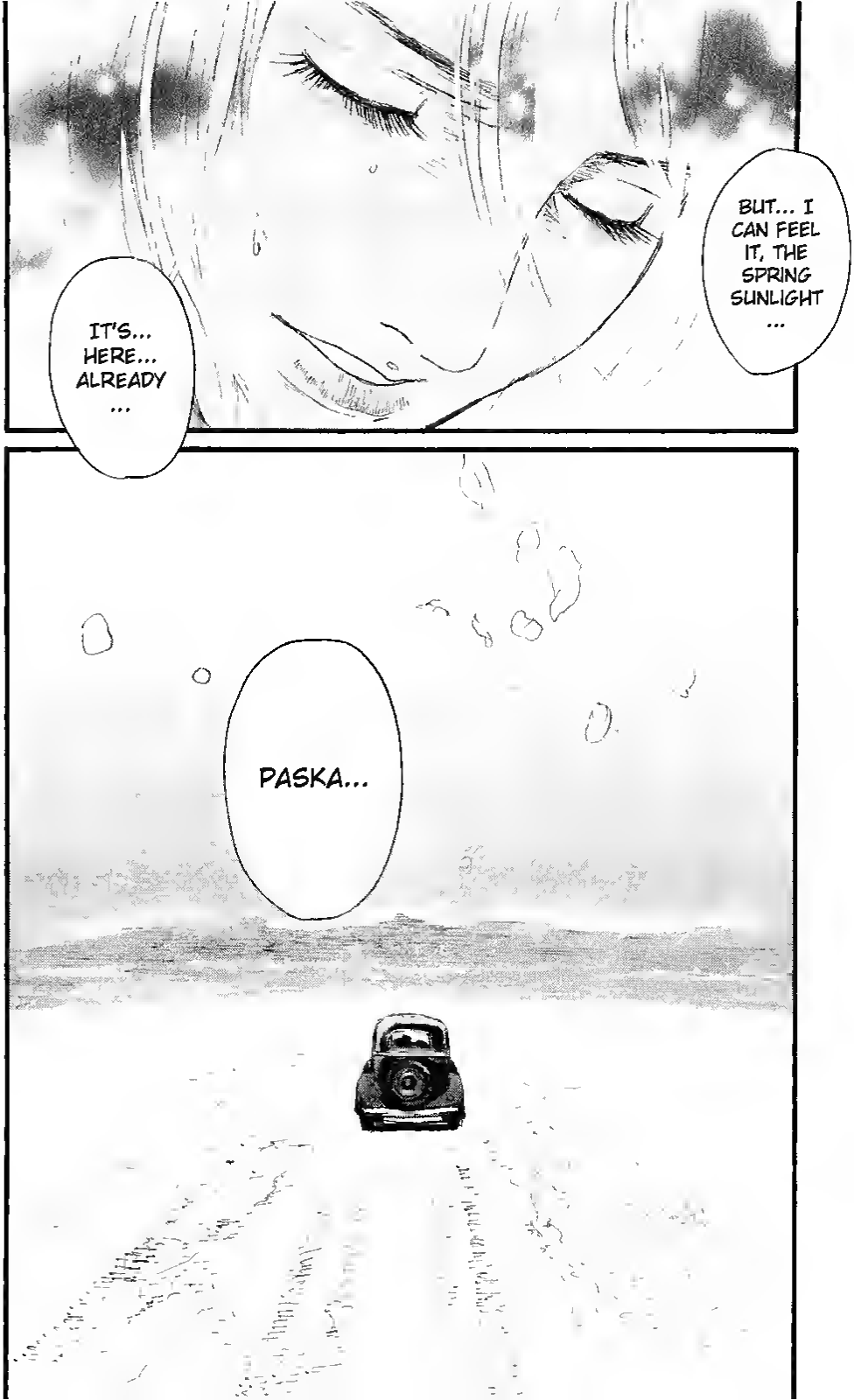
.....
.....


MIKHALKOV TOLD ME
I DON'T KNOW THE EXACT LOCATION YET THOUGH

VIKTOR DID...?
BELKA ZAYTSYVICH AND SHCHENOK... ER... MIZGIRYOV?
I'LL EXPLAIN THE ROUTE OUT OF THE COUNTRY WE'VE PREPARED FOR YOU
WE'LL FOLLOW THE MOUNTAIN RANGE NORTH, GET HELP FROM THE NENETS PEOPLE AND ARRIVE AT THE GULF OF OB...
I'M TRUPKACHOV FROM THE LEFT SR COMBAT ORGANISATION ...IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU
I HEARD ABOUT YOU FROM COMRADE SPIRIDONOVA ...
PLEASE TELL US HOW TO GET TO PETROZAVODSK SAFELY
I BEG YOUR PARDON !?
WE'RE NOT LEAVING THE SOVIET UNION

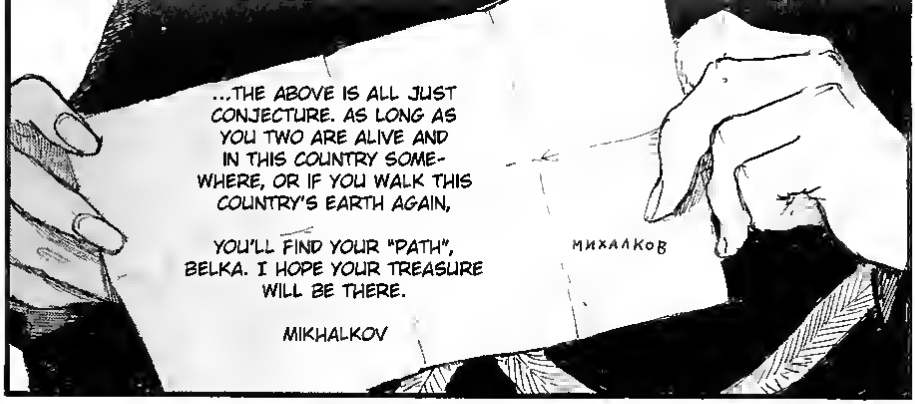


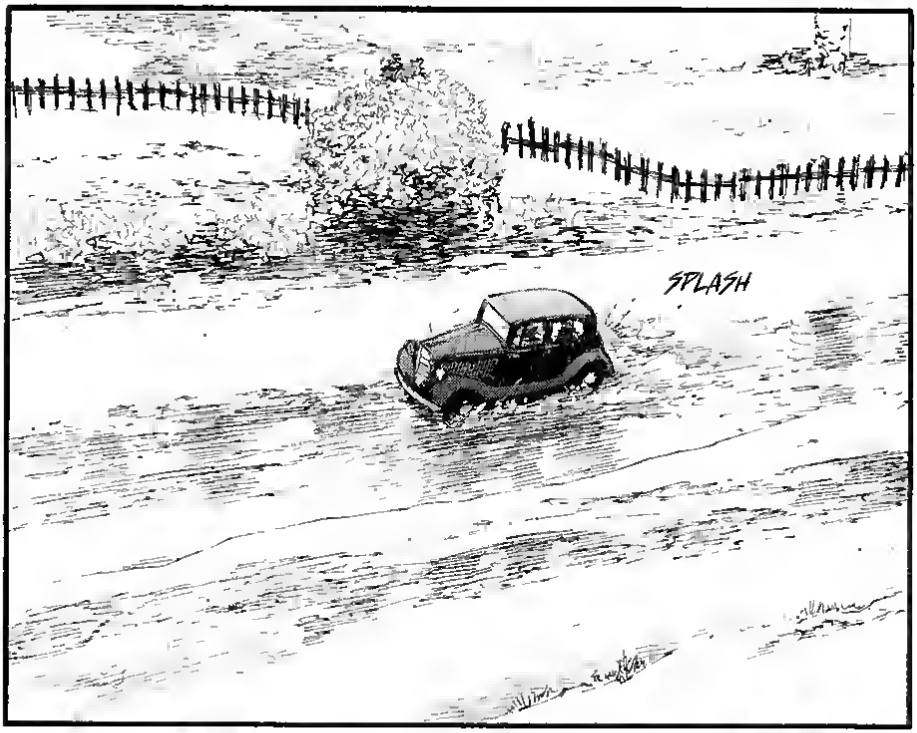
*A PRAYER SUNG DURING EASTER IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH


IT'S... HERE... ALREADY ...
BUT... I CAN FEEL IT, THE SPRING SUNLIGHT ...
PASKA...

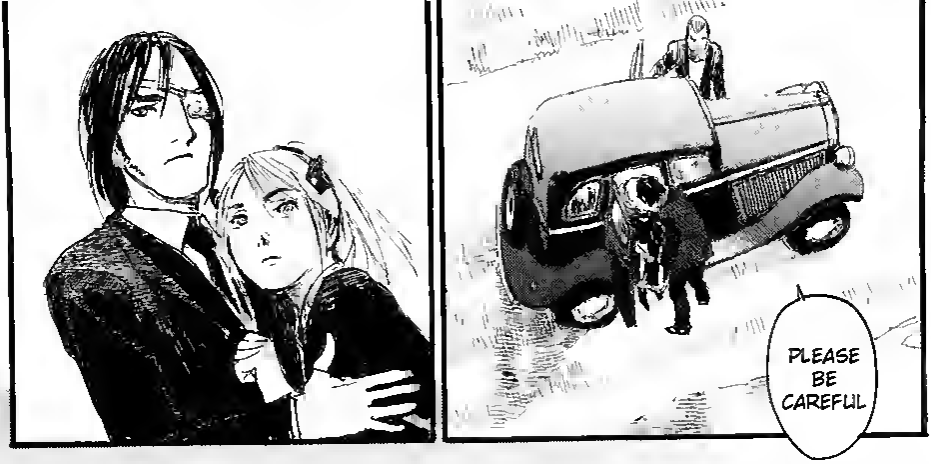
LAST CHAPTER

THE SQUIRREL AND PUPPY'S SPRING

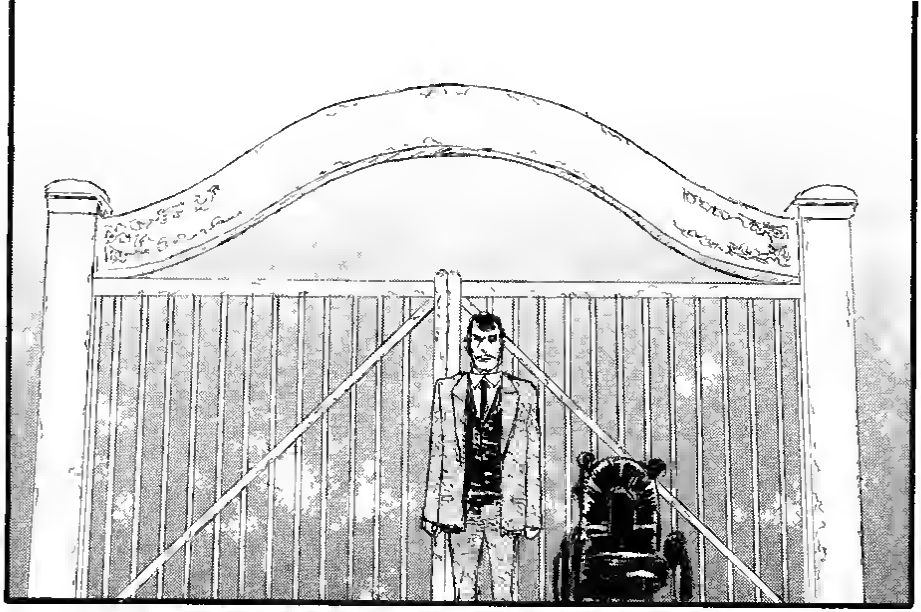

...THE ABOVE IS ALL JUST CONJECTURE. AS LONG AS YOU TWO ARE ALIVE AND IN THIS COUNTRY SOMEWHERE, OR IF YOU WALK THIS COUNTRY'S EARTH AGAIN,
YOU'LL FIND YOUR "PATH", BELKA. I HOPE YOUR TREASURE WILL BE THERE.
MIKHALKOV
МИХАЛКОВ

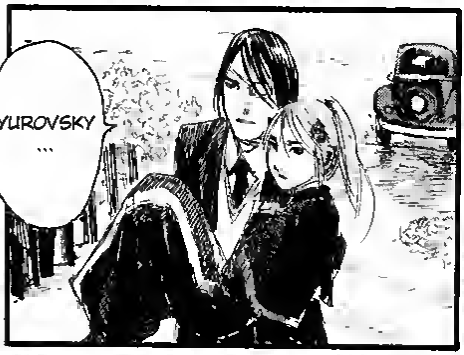

SPLASH

UGH!
Screech

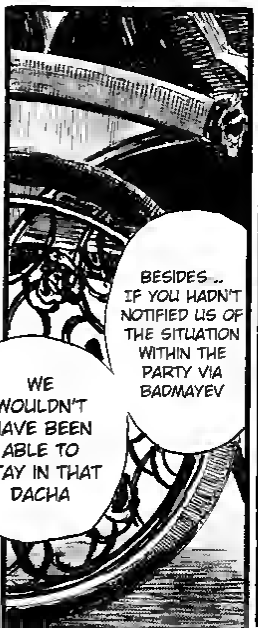

PLEASE BE CAREFUL

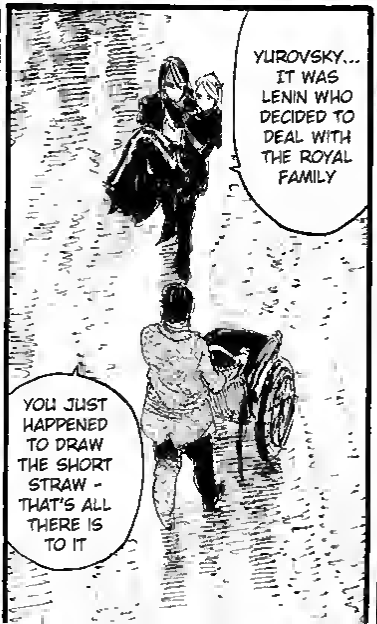
WELL THEN, GOOD LUCK
THANK YOU FOR THESE 2 MONTHS . TRUPKACHOV

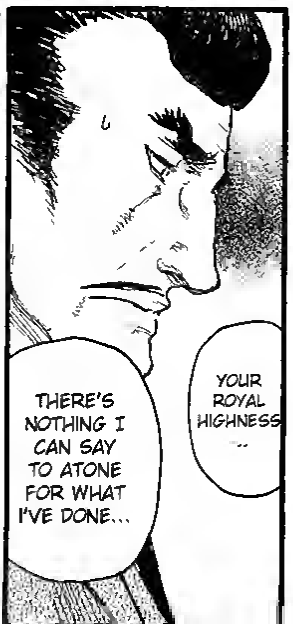



YUROVSKY ...

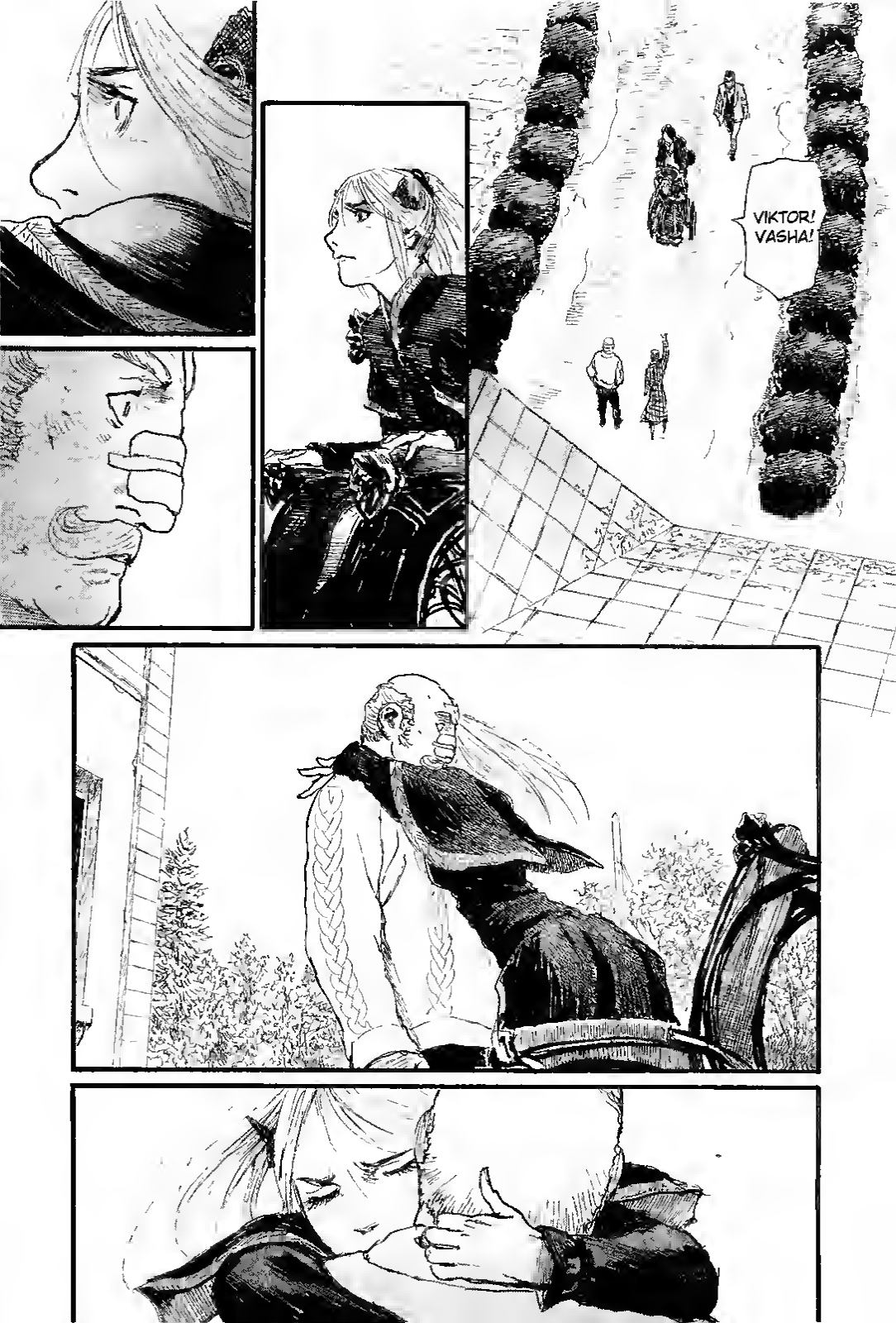
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME


BESIDES .. IF YOU HADN'T NOTIFIED US OF THE SITUATION WITHIN THE PARTY VIA BADMAYEV
WE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STAY IN THAT DACHA


YUROVSKY... IT WAS LENIN WHO DECIDED TO DEAL WITH THE ROYAL FAMILY
YOU JUST HAPPENED TO DRAW THE SHORT STRAW - THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT


YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS ..
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN SAY TO ATONE FOR WHAT I'VE DONE...

I'M WORKING AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNICAL MUSEUM IN MOSCOW NOW
I'VE BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO FREELY EXPLORE THIS PROPERTY UNDER THE PRETEXT OF INSPECTING IT AS THE SITE FOR AN ANNEX
WE HAVE 4 DAYS
SO I CALLED IN SOME REINFOR-CEMENTS
THANK YOU, YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HELP
ALSO, I THOUGHT WE MIGHT HAVE TROUBLE SEARCHING WITH ONLY THREE OF US
Ai!!

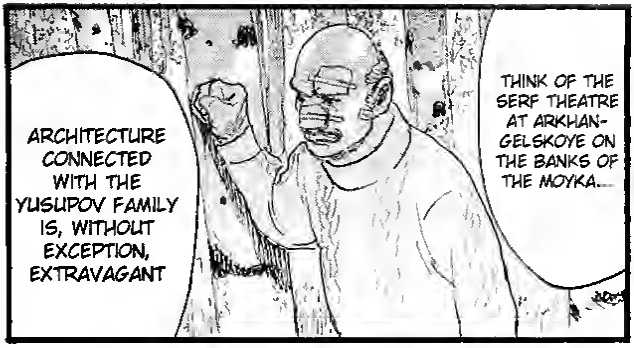

VIKTOR!
VASHA!

I DON'T THINK IT WAS A MISTAKE...
...YOU'RE HUGGING THE WRONG PERSON?
I WAS IMPRISONED IN LUBYANKA IMMEDIATELY AFTER WE PARTED... I WAS MEANT TO BE EXECUTED TOMORROW
...HOW DID YOU GET THIS?
THEN THEY GOT WORD THAT YOU'D ESCAPED FROM UFA
AND THEY QUICKLY CHANGED IT TO TORTURE
I'M SORRY...
INCIDENTALLY THIS IS JUST A FAKE MOUSTACHE
THEY SHAVED ME BUT I COULDN'T GO OUT IN PUBLIC LIKE THAT
THANKS TO YOU I'LL LIVE TO SEE ANOTHER DAY
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER IF THEY'D JUST SHOT ME

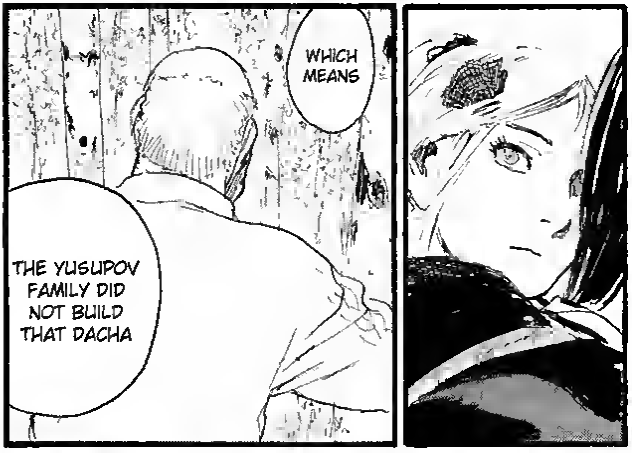
DIDN'T IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT THEY MIGHT CONFISCATE BELKA'S LEGS?
HERE, VIKTOR...
I ONLY REALISED AFTER WE'D PARTED
RIP
NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY I WAS NEVER PROMOTED
HMPH...
THIS WILL BE THE LAST TREASURE HUNT
WELL THEN, LET'S START

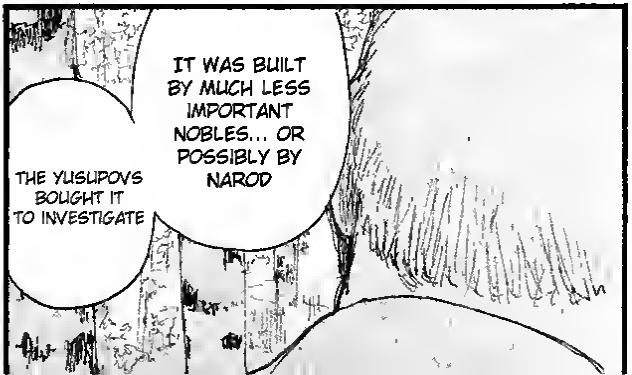
YES?
VIKTOR

BUT IF WE HADN'T HAVE YOUR DESCRIPTION OF THE "PATH"
WE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE JUST LEFT THE SOVIET UNION
I WISH I WAS WITH THOSE THREE...
KEEP AN EYE ON THE GROUND, IT COULD BE COVERED IN SNOW AND LEAVES
YOUR YEARS IN THE OGPU SERVED YOU WELL
THE INVESTIGATION YOU SPOKE IN YOUR LETTER WAS SPLENDID
...THE LATTER PART OF THE INFORMATION ALL CAME FROM RUMOURS
YOU CAN PRAISE ME AFTER WE'VE FOUND IT
THE NOBLEMAN APPEARED HERE WITH BODY GUARDS
THAT DAY
THE "PATH" ...
THEN THERE WAS ONE QUESTION REMAINING
AND AT THE SAME TIME REALISED WHO SHCHENOK MUST REALLY BE
I FIGURED OUT HE WAS FELIX YUSUPOV


ARCHITECTURE CONNECTED WITH THE YUSUPOV FAMILY IS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, EXTRAVAGANT
THINK OF THE SERF THEATRE AT ARKHANGELSKOYE ON THE BANKS OF THE MOYKA...

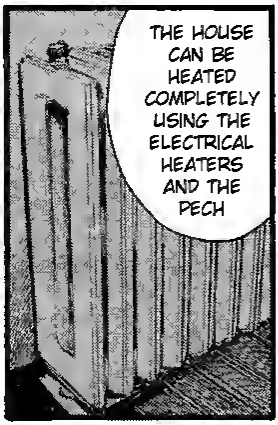
WHERE'S THAT BOYAR SENSE OF DESIGN?
COMPARE THAT TO THIS DACHA WE'VE SPENT ALMOST THREE YEARS LIVING IN

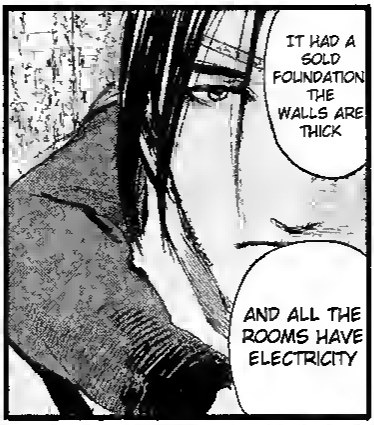

WHICH MEANS
THE YUSUPOV FAMILY DID NOT BUILD THAT DACHA


IT WAS BUILT BY MUCH LESS IMPORTANT NOBLES... OR POSSIBLY BY NAROD
THE YUSUPOVS BOUGHT IT TO INVESTIGATE

WHY
IS THAT DACHA SO PLAIN?

COMRADE BOLONEV CALLED IT "A CERTAIN CELEBRITY'S DACHA" - BUT THERE'S NO DOUBT IT'S A FUNCTIONAL DACHA HAVING BEEN BUILT IN THE SUBURBS WITH SOME LAND FOR FARMING...
WHAT WAS THE BUILDING ORIGINALLY?
THAT'S WHAT I THINK... BUT THAT JUST RAISED EVEN MORE QUESTIONS


THE HOUSE CAN BE HEATED COMPLETELY USING THE ELECTRICAL HEATERS AND THE PECH


IT HAD A SOLD FOUNDATION THE WALLS ARE THICK
AND ALL THE ROOMS HAVE ELECTRICITY

IT'S ALMOST LIKE A SMALL HOTEL

MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS
BUT IT'S BUILT TOO SOLIDLY TO BE A DACHA
WELL, THE FACILITIES IN THE ROOMS AREN'T UNIFORM SO I KNOW IT CAN'T HAVE BEEN A HOTEL

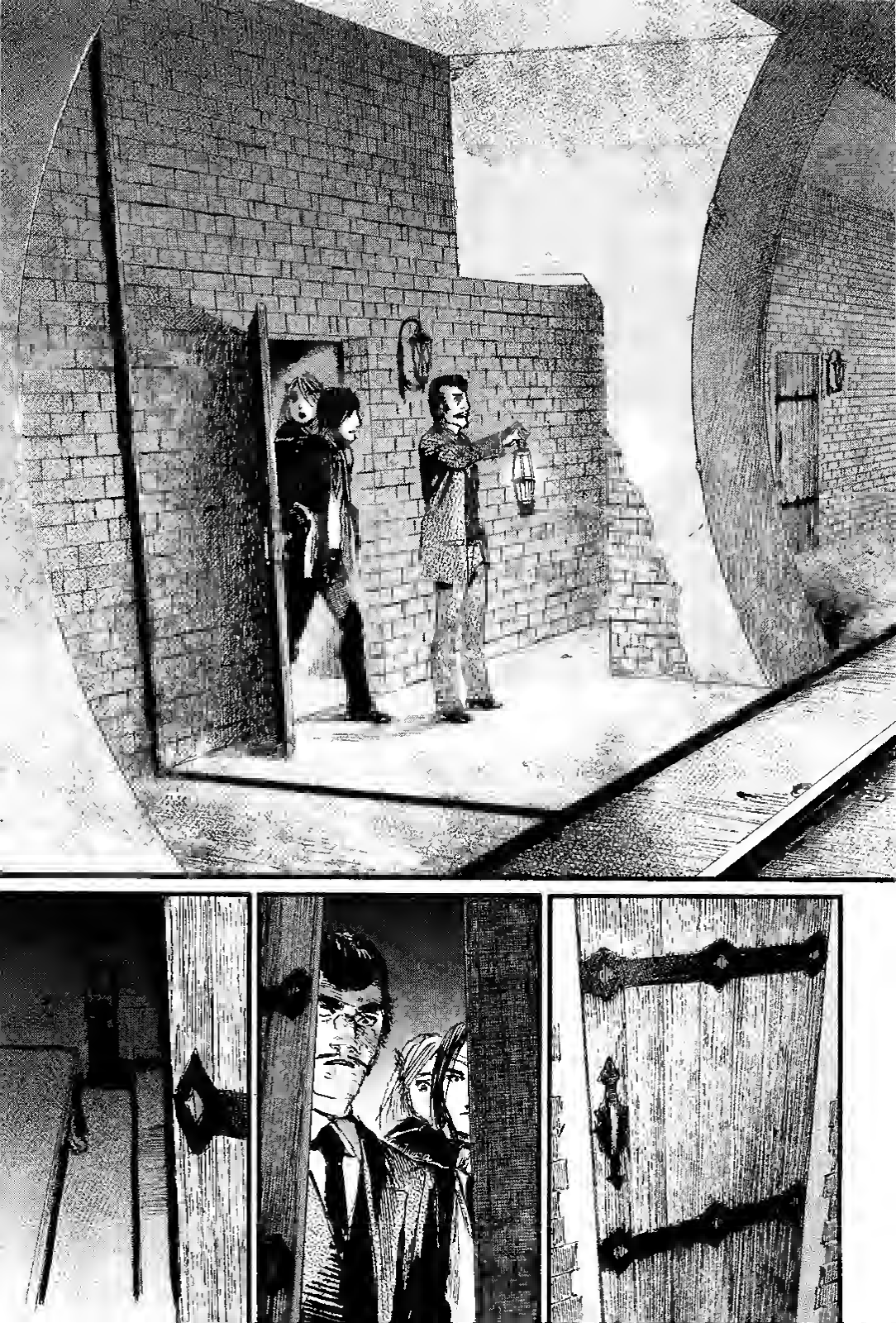
THAT'S THE IMPRESSION I GOT
OR THAT THAT CELEBRITY'S PATRON HAD BUILT IT PURPOSELY WITHOUT THE REGULAR EXCESS FOR THE CELEBRITY... OR FOR THEM TO LIVE TOGETHER WITH THE CELEBRITY
IT WAS BUILT SO THAT THAT CELEBRITY COULD LIVE IN HIDING REGARDLESS OF THE SEASON
BELKA... I JUST THOUGHT OF YOU
I CAN THINK OF A THOUSAND OTHER POSSIBILITIES ...WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO GIVE UP
HMPH... BUT
I WOULDN'T CALL THIS FANTASISING REASONING, AND THERE ARE COUNTLESS PEOPLE WHO COULD FIT THAT PROFILE

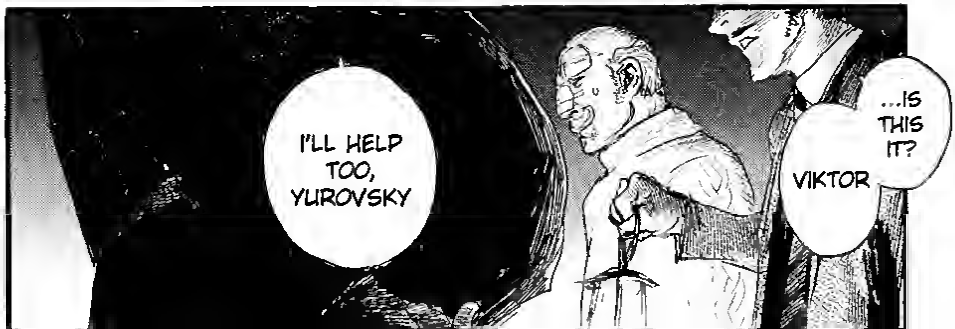
WAS IT JUST CHANCE THAT PRINCE YUSUPOV ENTRUSTED THE SEARCH OF THIS BUILDING TO A WOMAN LIKE THAT?
BECAUSE
YOU HAVE HYPNOTIC EYES AND EXCEL AT HERBAL MEDICINE
YOU CAN DEAL WITH HAEMO-PHILIA
WHO HELD ABILITIES SIMILAR TO YOUR OWN
I... NO, ALL OF RUSSIA KNOWS OF SOMEONE
ADDITIONALLY, IF MY CONJECTURES SO FAR HAVE BEEN CORRECT...
THEN HE CONFORMS IN EVERY WAY WITH THE FIGURE I'D IMAGINED
AND IF HE WAS THE TRUE OWNER OF THAT DACHA
IT'S OVER HERE!
VIKTOR! BELKA! SHCHENOK

DON'T SPEAK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE AS LONG AS YOU LIVE
Y- YES
VALENTINA
?

THIS... IS THE "PATH"...?
...IT'S A PARTY SECRET
IT'S SLIPPERY, BE CAREFUL
THIS YEAR AN UNDERGROUND RAILWAY OPENED IN MOSCOW... BUT IN TRUTH, EVEN DEEPER UNDERGROUND THAN THAT
IS A WEB OF SUB-TERRANEAN TUNNELS FOR STALIN'S PERSONAL USE
STALIN'S DACHA, MOSCOW UNIVERSITY, THE KREMLIN - THIS PATH THAT SURROUNDS ALL THE MAIN PARTS OF RUSSIA IS ASTONISHING
I HEAR THEY EXPANDED THE ROYAL FAMILY'S SUBTERRANEAN TUNNELS THAT HAD BEEN AROUND SINCE THE DAWN OF THE ROMANOV ERA
THE REASON IT WAS CREATED IS THE SAME NOW AS IT WAS BACK THEN - TO GET STATESMEN TO SAFETY IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY
HOWEVER... EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT A STATESMAN
BUT ARE A KEY FIGURE THAT COULD INFLUENCE RUSSIA'S DESTINY...

IT WOULDN'T BE ALL THAT STRANGE FOR YOUR PRIMARY RESIDENCE TO BE CONECTED TO THE TUNNELS...
...IF YOU'RE AN IMPORTANT PERSON




I'LL HELP TOO, YUROVSKY
VIKTOR
...IS THIS IT?

...OH!?
BELKA, IS THIS IT!?

*CHICKEN EGGS DECORATED TO CELEBRATE EASTER IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY. HANDICRAFTS AND CONFECTIONERY IMITATING THE EGGS ARE ALSO COMMONLY USED

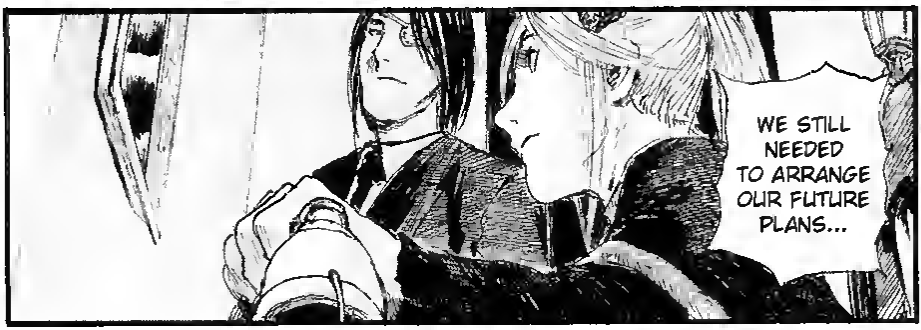
BUT IT SEEMS MANY NOBLES AND CELEBRITIES BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA ALSO ORDERED THESE GORGEOUS, ELABORATELY DECORATED EGGS
I HEARD THE ROMANOV FAMILY ALONE COMMISSIONED OVER 50 OF THEM TO BE MADE
HIS GRANDFATHER WAS ALEXANDER... WHAT?
WHAT !?
AND THE YUSUPOV FAMILY
PEOPLE LIKE CONSUELO VANDERBILT... ROTHSCHILD...
FWWSSHH—
CLICK
YUSUPOV ...

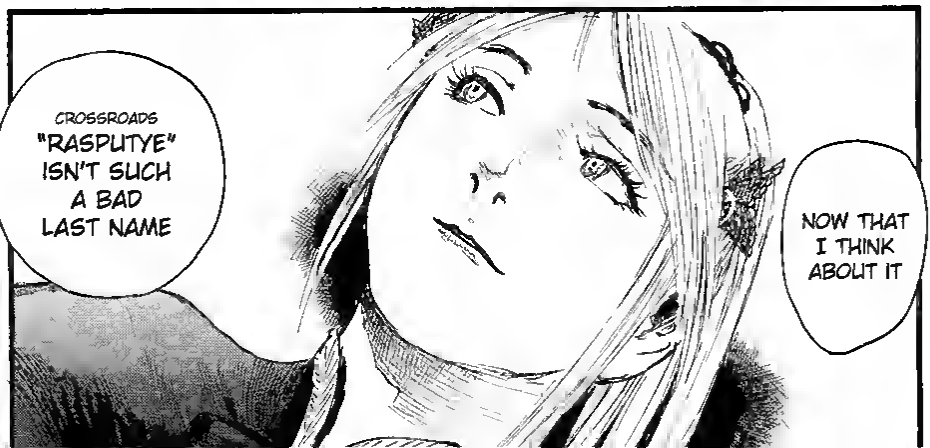
IRINA ALEXAND-ROVNA
...AND WHO'S THIS WOMAN?
...GRIGORI RASPUTIN ...I KNEW IT...
THE TSAR'S NIECE AND PRINCE YUSUPOV'S WIFE... SHE WAS THE ONE WHO PROBABLY MADE THIS
AND THE CHILD SHE'S HOLDING IS...
.....
.....
...PA ...PA
... MAMA...

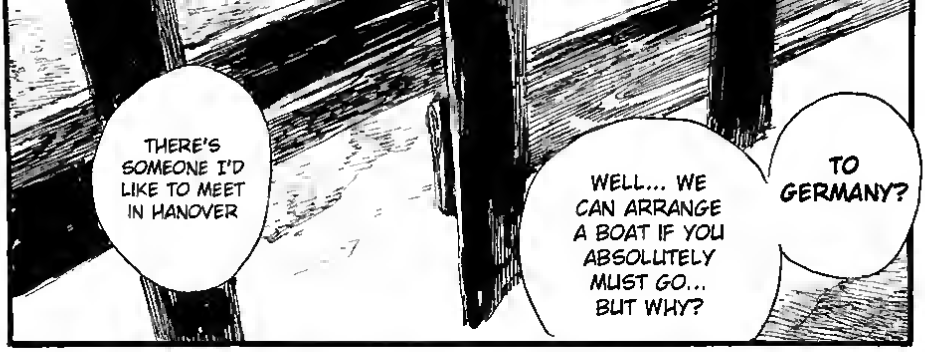
HONESTLY... "SUCCUMBING TO TEMPTATION" IS FRIGHTENING - I WAS SCARED TO DEATH WHEN I HEARD ABOUT ITS EXISTENCE FROM MY WIFE AFTER WE WENT INTO EXILE
NO, IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT IT TOOK SO LONG
OOH! YOU FINALLY FOUND IT!

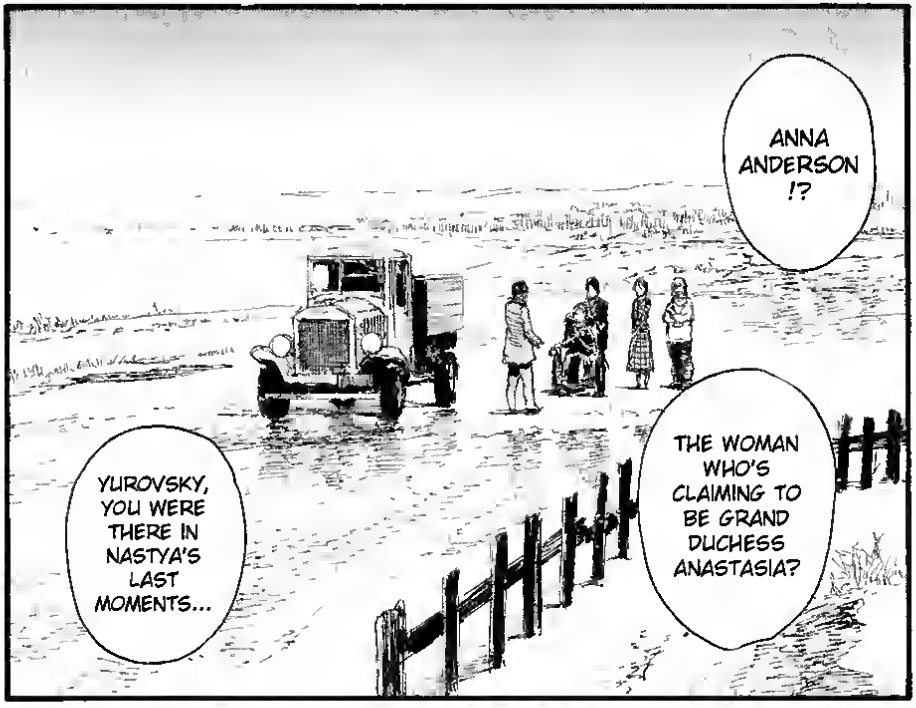
IF ITS EXISTENCE HAD BEEN MADE PUBLIC
I WOULD HAVE GONE FROM "RASPUTIN'S KILLER" WHO DESPAIRED FOR GREAT RUSSIA'S FUTURE
TO SIMPLY THE "MAN DRIVEN BY JEALOUSY"
"ISN'T THAT TRUE?"
BELKA... LISTEN. THIS IS A MATTER OF HONOUR
THAT'S THE ONLY THING THEY DIDN'T TAKE FROM ME
WE'LL ORGANISE A WAY FOR YOU TO SAFELY LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION
PASS THE PHONE TO YUROVSKY PLEASE
ACTUALLY, BEFORE THAT ...WE HAD A PACT, NADIA GRIGORIEVNA RASPUTINA
YOU CAN CALL YOURSELF NADIA GRIGORIEVNA YUSOPOVA FROM NOW ON
IT'S THE NAME OF THE FALLEN ARISTOCRAT WHO KILLED YOUR FATHER
ARE YOU SATISFIED NOW?
THEN PLEASE PASS ME OVER TO YURO...
CLICK
!

!? HEY! WAIT!


WE STILL NEEDED TO ARRANGE OUR FUTURE PLANS...


CROSSROADS "RASPUTYE" ISN'T SUCH A BAD LAST NAME
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT


THERE'S SOMEONE I'D LIKE TO MEET IN HANOVER
WELL... WE CAN ARRANGE A BOAT IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST GO... BUT WHY?
TO GERMANY?


ANNA ANDERSON !?
YUROVSKY, YOU WERE THERE IN NASTYA'S LAST MOMENTS...
THE WOMAN WHO'S CLAIMING TO BE GRAND DUCHESS ANASTASIA?

JUST HEARING THAT'S ENOUGH
ER... SHCHENOK

BUT
THERE ARE MANY FRAUDS PASSING THEMSELVES OFF AS ROMANOV GRAND DUCHESSES..

THAT NIGHT... MISS MARIA AND MISS ANASTASIA WERE STILL BREATHING
AND AFTER EMERGENCY CARE WE DESPATCHED THEM TO BE GUARDED BY THE WHITE ARMY
THE ONES BADMAEV SAID TO KILL... IT COULD BE POSSIBLE...

NO... VASHA, JUST PLEASE STAND UP
Slump
I'VE BEEN SO IMPOLITE TO YOU...
I JUST... HAVE SO MANY FEELINGS ALL AT ONCE...
I MEAN...! YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS, I... I...
I want to hug and kiss him
THANK YOU FOR THESE 3 YEARS
VASHA
VIKTOR
DIDN'T IT OCCUR TO YOU THAT I MIGHT HOLD BACK INFORMATION BECAUSE I WANTED A YOUNG, FEMALE BODY CLOSE AT HAND FOR AS LONG AS I COULD?
YOU'RE VERY NAIVE...
VIKTOR
I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT IF WE'D LIVED WITH ANY OTHER OGPU MEMBER, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN MARCHED OFF TO MOSCOW IMMEDIATELY

HMPH...
EVEN THOUGH I'M LIKE THIS NOW, I USED TO BE IN THE HUSSAR REGIMENT BEFORE THE REVOLUTION - I COULD NEVER EXPOSE THE MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY TO DANGER
...IT'S MY USELESS PRIDE
FAREWELL, YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS
NADIA GRIGORIEVNA

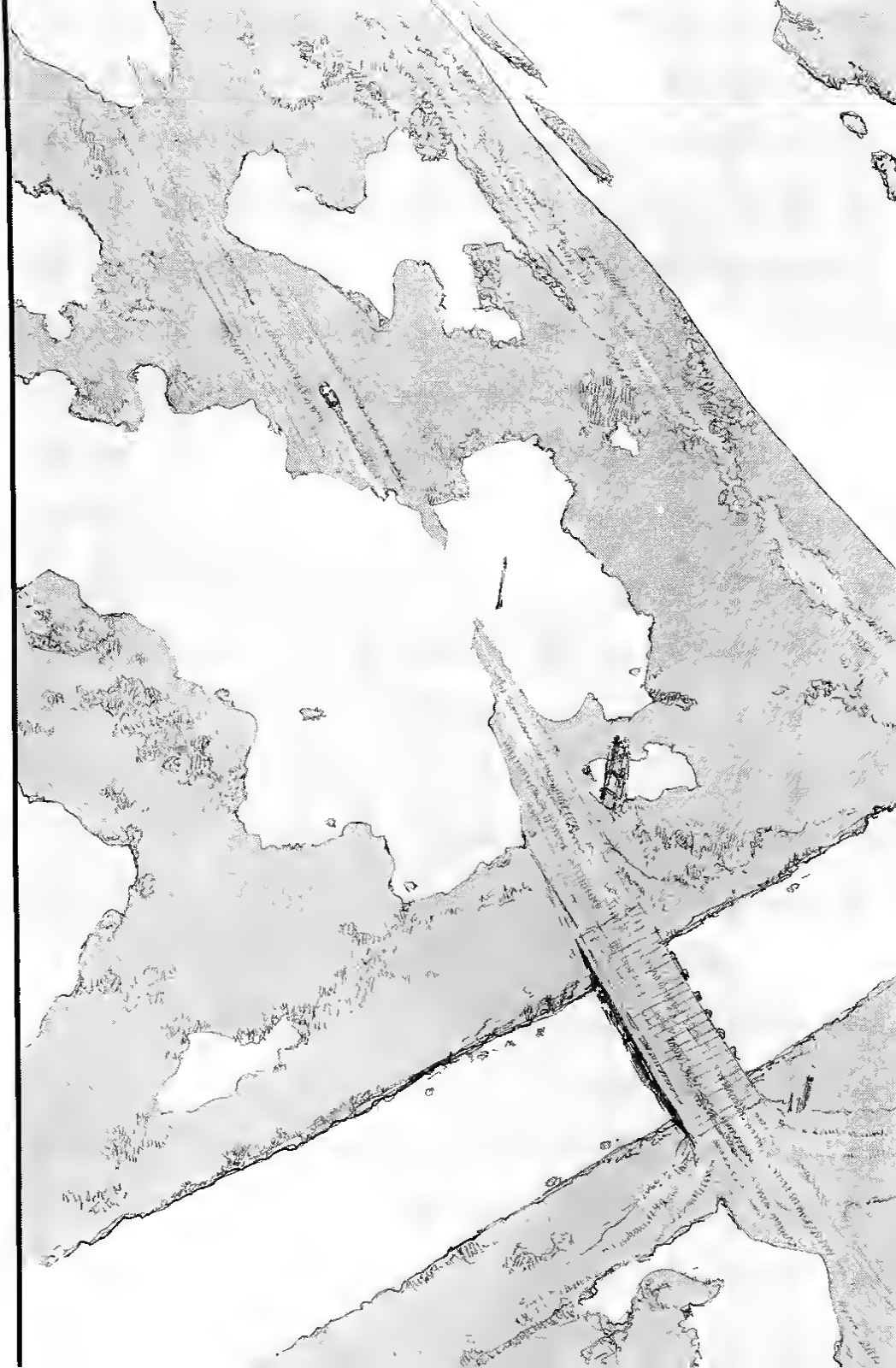
RATTLE
RATTLE

PLEASE COME INSIDE THE CABIN SOON
THE ROAD IS TERRIBLY MUDDY FROM THE MELTING SNOW
WE'LL BE FINE

HEY, SHCHENOK
YES?

RATTLE
RATTLE
WHAT WILL I DO...?
RATTLE
SPLASH!
WELL, I'M ALMOST CERTAIN SHE'LL BE A STRANGER
WHAT WILL YOU DO IF ANNA ANDERSON IS AN IMPOSTER?
SHE WON'T RETURN TO RUSSIA
WE'LL BE BACK THOUGH - THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT
I THINK THAT'S THE WAY TO GO ...EVEN IF SHE'S THE REAL THING
AS SPRING ARRIVES
AND PASKHA COMES
SPLASH
SO SNEGUROCHKA MUST LEAVE THIS COUNTRY

BUT WINTER WILL COME AGAIN



APPENDIX

A CHARACTER GUIDE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FINISHED READING

POSTSCRIPT

A CHARACTER GUIDE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FINISHED READING

BELKA ZAYTSYVICH SNEGURKA (1916~?)

THE PROTAGONIST OF THIS SERIES. A GIRL WHO WAS ASKED TO SEARCH A DACHA ON THE BANK OF LAKE ONEGA BY PRINCE YUSUPOV. SHE'S LOST BOTH LEGS BELOW THE KNEE AND ALWAYS SITS IN A WHEELCHAIR. HER REAL NAME IS NADIA GRIGORIEVNA RASPUTINA. A CHILD BORN OF THE AFFAIR BETWEEN PRINCE YUSUPOV'S WIFE IRINA AND GRIGORI RASPUTIN. HAS BOTH A ROYAL FACE AND RASPUTIN'S TALENTS.

SHCHENOK MIZGIRYOV (1904~?)

A QUIET YOUNG MAN WHO WAITS UPON BELKA. HE SUFFERS FROM A HEREDITARY CHRONIC DISEASE AND LIVES THROUGH BELKA'S TREATMENT. HE CALLS THE YOUNGER BELKA HIS "BIG SISTER". HIS REAL NAME IS ALEXEI NIKOLAEVICH ROMANOV. HE JUST SURVIVED EXECUTION WITH THE HELP OF TSARIST SUPPORTERS, HE IS RUSSIA'S LAST TSESAREVICH.

FELIX FELIXOVICH YUSUPOV (1887~1967)

THE INHERITOR OF RUSSIA'S GREATEST NOBLE FAMILY. IT WAS SAID THE YUSUPOV FAMILY'S ASSETS EXCEEDED EVEN THOSE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, BUT THE GREATER PART OF IT WAS LOST IN THE REVOLUTION. HE FLED TO FRANCE, AND AFTERWARDS MADE EFFORTS TO HELP REFUGEES FROM THE SOVIET UNION. HE WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL AND LIKED CORSSDRESSING, SO THERE WERE RUMOURS HE WAS A HOMOSEXUAL. HE'S FAMOUS AS ONE OF THE MEN WHO KILLED RASPUTIN.

IRINA ALEXANDROVNA (1895~1970)

THE GRANDCHILD OF THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER III AND FELIX YUSUPOV'S WIFE. BELKA'S MOTHER AND SHCHENOK'S (ALEXEI'S) COUSIN. HER NICKNAME IS IRA. WITH HER LINEAGE AND BEAUTY SHE WAS A FLOWER IN HIGH SOCIETY. IT WAS NEVER REPORTED ANYWHERE THAT SHE HAD AN AFFAIR WITH RASPUTIN.

ILYA EVGENIEVICH BYKOV (1899~?)

AN ARTIST FROM THE LAKE ONEGA DISTRICT. IN ACTUALITY HE'S AN OGPU MEMBER WHO WAS PUT IN CHARGE OF THE DACHA, BUT HE'S INSTIGATED BY BELKA TO FLEE TO ENGLAND. THE ORNAMENT SHE GIVES HIM IN ONE SHCHENOK (ALEXEI) TOOK FROM THE WINTER PALACE AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION.

ANATOLY BOLONEV (1891~?)

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE OGPU. MIKHALKOV'S SUPERIOR. HE'S A STONY-FACED MAN WHO'S DEDICATED TO HIS PROFFESIONAL DUTIES, BUT IT SEEMS HE ALSO HAS A SOFT SPOT AS WITNESSED WHEN HE LEFT BELKA AND SHCHENOK'S FATE IN MIKHALKOV'S HANDS.

VIKTOR STEPANOVICH MIKHALKOV (1878~?)

A MEMBER OF THE OGPU. BECOMES THE NEW CUSTODIAN OF THE DACHA. BELKA AND SHCHENOK LIVE IN AND HE WATCHES OVER THEIR ACTIONS WHILE MAKING THEM WORK. BEFORE THE REVOLUTION HE WAS IN THE HUSSAR REGIMENT AND CAME TO ADMIRE GRAND DUCHESS OLGA WHO WAS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE HUSSAR REGIMENT.

VALENTINA SHAMANAURI (1905~?)

A HOUSEKEEPER FROM GEORGIA EMPLOYED BY MIKHALKOV. HER NICKNAME IS VASHA. TRIES HER BEST TO RECREATE HER SPECIALTY GEORGIAN CUISINE USING SPICES AND NUTS WITH RATIONS. TAKES THE MAIL TO HER MASTER MIKHALKOV REGARDLESS OF WHO IT'S ADDRESSED TO.

MARIA SOLOVIEV (1899~1977)

HER REAL NAME IS MARIA GRIGORIEVNA RASPUTINA AND SHE IS GRIGORI RASPUTIN'S DAUGHTER. SHE'S BELKA'S STEPSISTER. SHE MARRIED THE YOUNG MYSTIC BORIS SOLOVIEV AND ESCAPED TO ROMANIA DURING THE REVOLUTION. SHE THEN MOVED TO PARIS AND BECAME A DANCER. INCIDENTALLY, ALTHOUGH HER HUSBAND BORIS WAS A SUPPORTER OF THE ROMANOV FAMILY, THERE IS A THEORY THAT HE WAS A BOLSHEVIK SPY.

PYOTR ALEKSANDROVICH BADMAYEV (1850~1923)

A DOCTOR WHO SPECIALISED IN TIBETAN MEDICINE IN SAINT PETERSBURG. HE WAS AN UNLICENSED DOCTOR BUT THE MYSTERIOUS TIBETAN HERBAL ARTS WERE POPULAR WITH PERSONAGES AND HE GAINED FAME AND FORTUNE. AFTER THE REVOLUTION HE WAS ARRESTED AND DIED WHILE IN PRISON, BUT HIS TECHNIQUES WERE PASSED ON TO HIS NEPHEW NIKOLAI BADMAYEV. THE BADMAYEV WHO IS MENTIONED IN CHAPTERS 3 AND 5 IS THIS NEPHEW.

VYACHESLAV RUDOLFOVICH MENZHINSKY (1874~1934)

CHAIRMAN OF THE OGPU. FROM THE POLISH UPPER CLASS, DESPISED THE WORKING CLASS DESPITE BEING A COMMUNIST. WOULD TORTURE PEOPLE WHILE WEARING CHINESE SILK AND NAIL POLISH, AND WAS RIDICULED AS "THE POET OF THE CHEKA" AND "THE AESTHETE". DIED DUE TO SICKNESS IN 1934. IT'S SAID HE MAY HAVE BEEN POISONED BY HIS SUCCESSOR GENRIKH YAGODA.

MARIA ALEXANDROVNA SPIRIDONOVA (1884~1941)

AN ACTIVIST WITH THE LEFT SOCIALIST-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (THE LEFT SR PARTY). MURDERED POLICE CHIEF LUZHENOVSKY AT THE AGE OF 21. WAS ARRESTED AND UNDERWENT HORRIFIC TORTURE BUT THIS INCIDENT MADE HER THE PARTY'S CHARISMATIC DARLING. FORMED A COMMUNE DURING HER IMPRISONMENT WITH OTHER SR COMBATANTS ALEXANDRA ISMAILOVICH AND IRINA KAKHOVSKAYA, AND SPENT OVER 30 YEARS CONTINUING TO FIGHT THE COMMUNISTS TO GET BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS FOR FARMERS. WAS EXECUTED IN ORYOL IN 1941.

IRINA KAKHOVSKAYA (1888~1980)

AN ACTIVIST WITH THE LEFT SR PARTY. SHE USED TO BE A BOLSHEVIK BUT WAS ATTRACTED TO THE SR PARTY WHO FOUGHT FOR THE FARMERS AND FINALLY BECAME A COMBATANT FOR THE PARTY AT AGE 18. WAS INVOLVED WITH THE ASSASSINATION OF THE GERMAN MILITARY COMMANDER EICHHORN IN 1918, THE (ATTEMPTED) ASSASSINATION OF THE RUSSIAN WHITE ARMY STANDARD-BEARER DENIKIN, ETC. WAS EVEN MORE ACTIVE AS A TERRORIST THAN SPIRIDONOVA.

NIKOLAI ALEXANDROVICH ROMANOV (1868~1918)

NIKOLAI II. THE LAST TSAR OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE. MARRIED QUEEN VICTORIA OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S GRANDDAUGHTER, HAD 4 GIRLS AND 1 BOY. SHCHENOK'S (ALEXEI'S) FATHER. NOT PARTICULARLY ESTEEMED AS A TSAR, BUT IT'S SAID HE WAS A GENTLE FAMILY MAN. THAT THE SON HE'D LONG WISHED FOR WAS AFFLICTED WITH HAEMOPHILIA WAS ONE OF THE REASONS THAT MADE HIM A TRAGIC TSAR.

OLGA NIKOLAEVNA ROMANOVA (1895~1918)

NIKOLAI II'S ELDEST DAUGHTER. SHE OFTEN NURSED HER HAEMOPHILIAC YOUNGER BROTHER, ALEXEI. SHE WAS MADE AN HONORARY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE HUSSAR REGIMENT AND ATTENDED MILITARY PARADES, PERFORMING THE DUTIES THE TSAREVICH SHOULD HAVE. WAS EXECUTED IN JULY 1918 BY YUROVSKY ALONG WITH THE REST OF HER FAMILY. ACCORDING TO SHCHENOK, BELKA BORE A STAGGERING RESEMBLANCE TO GRAND DUCHESS OLGA.

ANASTASIA NIKOLAEVNA ROMANOV (1901~1918)

NIKOLAI II'S FOURTH DAUGHTER. PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY WERE CLOSEST IN AGE IT'S SAID SHE WAS THE MOST LOVED BY ALEXEI OUT OF THE FOUR SISTERS. EVEN AFTER THE DEATH OF RUSSIA'S LAST ROYAL FAMILY, RUMOURS OF SIGHTINGS AND THEORIES ABOUT HER SURVIVAL WERE NEVER ENDING. ANNA ANDERSON, WHO CONTINUED TO PROCLAIM TO BE GRAND DUCHESS ANASTASIA UNTIL HER DEATH, IS ONE OF THE MOST WELL KNOWN.

YAKOV MIKHAILOVICH YUROVSKY (1878~1938)

WAS CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS AT IPATIEV HOUSE IN YEKATERINBURG WHERE THE ROYAL FAMILY WERE CONFINED DURING THE REVOLUTION. WAS INFAMOUS AS THE MAN WHO EXECUTED THE ROYAL FAMILY, BUT IT'S SAID HE HAD STRICT STANDARDS ABOUT OBEYING ORDERS. IN 1921 HE BECAME CHIEF OF THE GOLD DEPARTMENT OF THE SOVIET STATE TREASURY AND LATER HELD THE POST OF DIRECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNICAL MUSEUM CONCURRENTLY. DIED FROM ILLNESS IN 1938.

VASILY VASILYEVICH YAKOVLEV (1885~1938)

A LATVIAN BOLSHEVIK PARTY MEMBER. HE ONCE TRIED TO LET THE ROYAL FAMILY WHO WERE CONFINED AT TOBOLSK IN SERBIA ESCAPE FROM THE COUNTRY BUT FAILED AND THE FAMILY WERE SENT TO YEKATERINBURG. INCIDENTALLY, THAT WAS THE ONLY RESCUE PLAN IMPLEMENTED BY THE MONARCHIST FACTIONS WHILE THE EMPEROR WAS INCARCERATED. WAS ARRESTED IN MOSCOW FOR TREASON IN 1928. WAS LATER RELEASED BUT WAS RECAPTURED IN 1938 AND EXECUTED.

GRIGORI YEFIMOVICH RASPUTIN (1871~1916)

THE MAD MONK WHO TRICKED TSARIST RUSSIA INTO CHAOS. AS HE HAD WAYS TO TREAT THE TSAREVICH'S HAEMOPHILIA, HE GAINED TREMENDOUS TRUST FROM TSAR NIKOLAI II AND TSARINA ALEXANDRA AND BEFORE LONG HE HAD STRENGTHENED HIS INFLUENCE OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S AFFAIRS. MANY OF HIS ADHERENTS WERE UPPER CLASS WOMEN AND THERE WAS AN UNENDING STREAM OF RUMOURS OF LICENTIOUSNESS. IN 1916 HE WAS ASSASSINATED BY SEVERAL CONSPIRATORS LED BY PRINCE YUSUPOV AT THE YUSUPOV PALACE.

POSTSCRIPT

IT ALL BEGAN WITH GETTING EXCITED WITH MY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ABOUT DRAWING A STORY ABOUT A TSUNDERE GIRL WHO WAS 95% TSUN. HE SAID, "WHAT'S THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN"?, BUT I SAID, "PLEASE JUST HEAR ME OUT." AND AFTER I GAVE HIM THE KEYWORDS "WESTERN WOMAN", "PERIOD DRAMA" AND "WHEELCHAIR" HE SAID I SHOULD GIVE THE CHARACTERS SOME PRETENTIOUS, EASY SOUNDING GERMAN OR RUSSIAN NAMES. THAT WAS THE REASON I PICKED UP 20 BOOKS ABOUT RUSSIA AT RANDOM, AND WHILE I WAS READING THEM I WAS TAKEN IN BY A DESCRIPTION RELATING TO THE RESULTS OF DNA TESTING OF THE LAST TSAR OF THE ROMANOV DYNASTY AND HIS FAMILY.

IT HAD BEEN AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION THAT THE REMAINS OF THE EXECUTED NIKOLAI II AND HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN FOUND AND CONCLUDED TO BE THE REAL DEAL THROUGH DNA TESTING, BUT THE WAY THEY TESTED IT BACK THEN WAS TO COMPARE THE DNA OF SURVIVORS FROM THE ROMANOV LINEAGE AND THE DNA OF THE REMAINS (IN REGARDS TO NIKOLAI II, A BANDAGE WITH HIS BLOOD ON IT REMAINED IN JAPAN FROM THE OTSU INCIDENT, BUT PEOPLE WERE SO AMAZED IT WAS NIKOLAI'S BLOOD AND KEPT TOUCHING IT SO MUCH THAT IT COULDN'T BE USED FOR DNA TESTING... ACCORDING TO WIKIPEDIA). FROM THE CLOSE RESEMBLANCE OF THE DNA AND THE SITE WHERE THE REMAINS WERE DISCOVERED IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT THEY WERE REAL, BUT WHEN I READ THIS I THOUGHT, "WHAT? SO IF YOU BURIED ONE OF THE TSAR'S RELATIVES WHO WAS A SIMILAR HEIGHT TO HIM IN THE PLACE WHERE THE ROYAL FAMILY'S REMAINS WERE BURIED, THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE?" SO I THOUGHT, WHY DON'T I DO A STORY ABOUT ONE OF NIKOLAI'S CHILDREN BEING SUBSTITUTED AND SURVIVING? MANY PEOPLE RELATED TO THE ROMANOV FAMILY WERE KILLED IN THE REVOLUTION SO IT WOULDN'T BE STRANGE IF THERE WAS A RELATIVE'S BODY THEY COULD SWITCH FOR ONE OF THE CHILDREN'S. STORIES HAD ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT MARIA AND ANASTASIA LIVING, SO I WENT WITH ALEXEI. BUT WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO ABOUT THE

HAEMOPHILIA? RASPUTIN WAS ALREADY DEAD... THAT'S HOW I CAME UP WITH THE PREMISE FOR THE STORY AND IT SOMEHOW OR OTHER BECAME A WHOLE VOLUME. AS I WAS WRITING THE 95% TSUN FROM THE INITIAL PLAN VANISHED AND IT TURNED INTO A TSUNDERE STORY ABOUT A BALD OLD MAN. I FEEL MORALLY RESPONSIBLE.

ONE THING I REGRET IS THAT IN MOSTLY RESTRICTING THE STORY TO ONE SETTING I WASN'T ABLE TO DRAW RUSSIAN SCENERY/SOVIET SCENERY. A MANGA ABOUT SOVIET RUSSIA THAT DOESN'T FEATURE MOSCOW, LENINGRAD, KOLKHOZ OR THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR... EVEN I THINK THAT'S PUSHING IT. INCIDENTALLY, THE DACHA'S FACADE WAS MODELLED ON THE HOUSE IN YASNAYA POLYANA WHERE TOLSTOY WAS BORN. I'M SURE SOME PEOPLE WHO KNOW ABOUT RUSSIA READ TOO DEEPLY INTO THAT, MAYBE THINKING THE STORY WOULD BE CONNECTED TO TOLSTOY SOMEHOW. I'M FULL OF GUILT.

BUT IT'S REALLY INTERESTING LEARNING ABOUT A COUNTRY'S HISTORY. BEFORE STARTING THIS PROJECT I ONLY KNEW THINGS LIKE "RUSSIANS GULP DOWN VODKA IN EARLY SUMMER, JUMP IN THE RIVER AND A PERCENTAGE OF THEM HAVE HEART ATTACKS AND DIE", OR "THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF DEATH DURING THE SOVIET UNION ERA WAS TELEVISIONS EXPLODING", BUT NOW THE STANDBY IMAGE ON MY MOBILE IS TATIANA NIKOLAEVNA. I'VE TURNED INTO AN OTMA MOE BASTARD.

UNTIL WRITING THIS MANGA I FELT LIKE THE "RUSSIA REVOLUTION" WAS AN INCIDENT THAT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO, BUT WHILE REASEARCHING I REALISED THAT KERENSKY, ONE OF THE PRIME MINISTERS FOR THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AT THE TIME OF THE RUSSIA REVOLUTION, WAS STILL ALIVE WHEN I WAS BORN. THAT WAS THE MOMENT I THOUGHT THE OBVIOUS: HISTORY DOESN'T JUST EXIST IN BOOKS.

かつてこれほど
残酷な
少女の運命が
あっただろうか。

資産家・ブラッドハーレー家の
養女になることが、
孤児院の少女たちの憧れだった。
ブラッドハーレー聖公女歌劇団で
華々しく活躍する……
そんな期待に胸を膨らませた少女たちが
たどり着いた先は、暗い暗い塀の中。
恐ろしく壮絶な悪夢が始まる――。

「真実を
知りなさい、
コーデリア」

沙村広明のロング・ベストセラー

ブラッドハーレーの馬車

B6判
定価（本体667円＋税）

春風のスネグラチカ

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Alexei Nikolaevich Romanov

Felix Felixovich Yusupov

Irina Alexandrovna

Maria Grigorievna Rasputina

Pyotr Alexandrovich Badmayev

Vyacheslav Rudolfovich Menzhinsky

Maria Spiridonova

Irina Kakhovskaya

Nikolai Alexandrovich Romanov

Olga Nikolaevna Romanova

Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanova

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